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Contents.

Author	Subject	Published	N ^o of pages
	The Scripture Account of a Future State	L. 1754	78
Thos Dixon	Sovereignty of the Divine Administration	2 nd Ed ⁿ L. 1766	57
Caleb Fleming	Another Defence of the Unity	L. 1766	54
	Jewish Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead	2 nd Ed ⁿ 1771	80
	Interests of Truth + Virtue invariably pursued by Providence in the permission of Error + Vice	L. 1775	31
	A Letter to the Rev. Mr R. Housman	Lanc ^r 1787	46
"A member of the Old Church"	An Inquiry into the Commission + Doctrine of Emanuel Swedenborg	M ^{or} 1794	68
	The Welsh Freeholder's Farewell Epistles to the Bishop of Rochester	L. 1794	xii 68
J. Scott + B. Carpenter	} Letter to Rev. R. Foley in answer to Stourbridge charges against Dissenters		42



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AN INQUIRY
INTO THE
COMMISSION AND DOCTRINE
OF THE
NEW APOSTLE
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG:

CONTAINING A
SHORT HISTORY OF IMPOSTORS AND ENTHUSIASTS;
AN EXAMINATION OF MR. SWEDENBORG'S VISIONS;
HIS CABALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE;
HIS DENYING THE RESURRECTION;
AS ALSO THIRTY-ONE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND
NEW TESTAMENT;
THE AFFECTED OBSCURITY OF HIS WRITINGS;
AND SOME REMARKS ON HIS MOST PALPABLE CON-
TRADICTIONS;
CONCLUDING WITH A
FEW STRICTURES ON HIS CALLING HIS FOLLOWERS
THE NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH.

BY A MEMBER OF THE OLD CHURCH.

"Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?"

Acts.

Silvis ubi passim
Palantes error certo de tramite pellit,
Ille sinistrorsum, hic dextrorsum abit, unus utrique
Error, sed variis illudit partibus.

Hor.

While mazy error draws mankind astray
From truth's sure path, each takes his devious way;
One to the right, one to the left recedes,
Alike deluded, as each fancy leads.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Author of this Inquiry living in a neighbourhood where Mr. Swedenborg's writings are circulated with the utmost avidity, after hearing him proclaimed by his admirers to have been as highly commissioned an apostle as John the Baptist, was naturally induced by this dignified comparison, to examine into the reality of such extraordinary pretensions.

Accordingly he sat down to peruse the writings of this new apostle with some attention, making short extracts from them as he went along, not with any view to publish, but for his own information; when he had finished the task, he was struck with reviewing such glaring absurdities palmed on the world as the oracles of God. Every fresh paragraph, hostile to Christianity and common sense, led him into a train of reflections, which, for the improvement of his own mind, he committed to paper, but a friend on seeing them undertook to lay them before the public, hoping, through the Divine blessing, that among the class of readers, where the Baron's writings most easily obtain credit, these Strictures might operate as an antidote, to open the eyes of some who might otherwise be decoyed from the religion of their fathers, and of the New Testament, by the pretended revelations of this false prophet.

Although the Author has his own peculiar tenets, tenets which he deems it important to adhere to, yet he hopes the reader will here find him de-
his

fending the peculiarities of no party, but Christianity as opposed by Swedenborgianism. The man who honestly takes the Scriptures for his guide, and believes that eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, he esteems, and although he knows of no system more repugnant to the gospel of Christ than Mr. Swedenborg's; yet he hopes his benevolence and charity shall never be alienated from any of the Baron's followers, who shall appear to him in the integrity of their heart to have embraced this new religion.

This much he acknowledges, lest (as is frequently the case) any should overlook the matter, and complain against the manner of expressing his convictions on the errors of Mr. Swedenborg. To whom he would further observe, that in proportion as any scheme sets at defiance reason and revelation, it ought to be combated with a degree of corresponding resentment, especially when it is further recollected, that many readers never think their author seriously convinced of the truth which he defends, if he does not treat its adversary in the language of marked opposition; and such an adversary to truth does the Author of this Inquiry consider the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

ERRATA.

Page 15, note, *for internal read infernal.*

Page 28, line 21, *for truth read good.*

Page 29, line 38, *dele the figures 3204 with 444 below, and "the proof."*

Page 49, line 31, *dele "to be."*

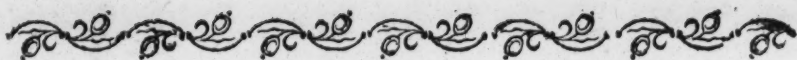
Page 55, line 11, *dele telling.*

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SECT. I.

On Impostors and Enthusiasts.

EVER since our blessed Saviour appeared on earth, to reveal and establish his doctrine among men, those who have considered his precepts and example as sufficient to make them wise unto salvation, have, from time to time, been intruded upon by the enthusiasms of some, and the impostures of others, who have either assumed the sacred character which he sustains in the church, or contended that they had a special command from God, to add some further revelations as a supplement to his doctrines.

Scarcely had Christ ascended to heaven till there arose men who personated his sacred character, and availing themselves of the ignorance and credulity of the people, persuaded several to believe they were the true Messiahs.

About the year 35, Simon Magus asserted that he was the great power of God, that he descended from heaven to deliver man, that he had assumed the human form, and that though he had apparently suffered death in Judea, he had not in reality. He ascribed to his mistress, Helena, the production of angels, and to these angels the creation of the world. In the following age, one Barchochebas drew a number of deluded creatures after him, by telling them that he was the Messiah, and as his name in the ancient Hebrew denoted the Son of a Star, he applied to himself that prophecy of Baalim, Num. xxiv. 17. "There shall come a Star out of Judah, and a Sceptre out of Israel." In the fifth century, about the year 434, there appeared in the island of Crete, another false Christ, called Moses, who pretended to be the ancient legislator of the Jews, come down from heaven to procure them a passage through the Sea to Judea. Great numbers jumped into the sea, expecting it would open, and give them passage; in this attempt

tempt many were drowned. After which the impostor disappeared *. About the year 550, a false Messiah, called Julian, appeared in Palestine. Under him many took up arms; but Justinian, the Roman emperor, sending some troops against them, Julian was taken and executed, and his party dispersed.

In the eight century, a Spaniard, called Serenus, pretended to conduct the Jews to Palestine; but they soon found him out to be an impostor. The twelfth century was very fruitful in impostors of this kind; there appearing no less than seven or eight in France, Spain, Persia, &c. But the last century produced a very famous impostor. About the year 1660, one Zabatai Tzevi, a native of Aleppo, set up for a Messiah. He was summoned before the synagogue at Smyrna, and being convicted, was condemned to death; but as none could be found to execute the sentence, he was banished, and passing through Greece came to Alexandria, from thence to Gaza, where he found a Jew, named Nathan Levi, whom he persuaded to act the part of the prophet Elias, and many were deluded by this deception. He afterwards came to Constantinople, where he was apprehended, and ordered to be run through with a sword; to avoid which he turned Mussulman †.

The limits of this pamphlet will not permit me to give the reader a full detail of those impostors, who in order to depreciate the character and integrity of our blessed Saviour, have endeavoured to substitute themselves in his stead. Let it suffice to observe, that as he foretold so it has come to pass, that many false Christs have arisen in his name, or rather, assuming his name; but their success being no better than their sincerity, they have only confirmed the friends of Christianity more effectually in the rational belief that the Messiah is come, and that it is in vain for them to look for another.

As some have endeavoured to subvert Christianity by personating its author, and thereby wishing to transfer his glory to themselves, so others have pretended that his gospel was an imperfect system; that it did not comprehend all the discoveries which the Almighty intended to make to mankind, in this preliminary state; and that before we can perfectly understand the will of God, it is necessary for us to believe certain dreams and visions with which God has been pleased to favour them, in order that they might reveal them to mankind. Of these minor apostles, the several ages of Christianity have produced a plentiful crop. Scarcely

* Socrat. Hist. Eccles.

† M'Bain.

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ly had the impostures and visions of Simon Magus been detected, till Montanus, a native of Arbadon in Mæsia, started up, and pretended that he was the Paraclete, or Comforter, promised by Christ, and that he was sent to perfect the moral doctrines of the gospel. He made an artful distinction between the Comforter promised by Christ to his apostles, and the Holy Ghost, which was shed upon them at the day of Pentecost, and understood the former as a divine teacher, and declared that he was that Comforter alluded to by our Saviour.

In the third century, when the philosophy of Plato began to be blended with Christianity, and the admirers of that pagan medley pretended that the scriptures were not to be understood in their literal but in their allegorical sense, one Paul of Thebais rose up, as he said himself, in the name of the Lord, and fleeing from the severity of the times, lived with his followers in caverns and dens, and was considered as the oracle of his day, for visions and extraordinary illuminations; but of whose followers, after his death, we have little account, they having soon returned to the common mass of Christians, after the fervour and enthusiasms of their leader had died away. In the fifth century, in order to settle a popish dispute, about a certain hymn being introduced in the litany, a young man at Constantinople, declared he was taken up into heaven; where, according to his own report, he had the felicity of hearing the angels sing in Greek, the very hymn in question, the words of which on his return to earth, he repeated to Proclus his bishop*. The seventh century was distinguished by the pretended revelations and new doctrines of that celebrated impostor Mahomet. With a capacious memory, sublime imagination, and a clear and rapid judgment, this illiterate barbarian, who in his youth had been addicted to religious contemplations, each year, for some time, retired to the cave of Herva, three miles from Mecca; where, by the assistance of an apostate Jew, and a Syrian monk, he composed those visions and reveries which at this day spread their influence and belief even farther than the Christian religion. Every dogma which he wished to establish, and every tenet, however absurd, which he intended his deluded followers to believe, was confirmed by a chapter of his Coran, written in heaven, and, as he was pleased to say, sent down for his publication in the world; and to give the greater appearance of authenticity to his impostures, he published an account of his
being

* Jortin.

being taken up, one night, into the third heavens, where he conversed with God, and saw written in a motto over the celestial gates, "No God, but God, and Mahomet is his prophet." I had forgot to tell the reader that he rode on Alborack, the horse on which the angel Gabriel was mounted, when he announced to the Virgin Mary the birth of our Saviour; and this beast, he tells us, was exceedingly skittish, owing to its never having been rode since that expedition. After this, in Germany, two famous, or rather infamous prophetesses, started up, Heldegard abbess of Bengen, and Elizabeth of Schonauge, who published a long catalogue of dreams and visions, which they fancied, or pretended to receive from above. The multitude resorted to these new oracles, and respected their decisions as the commands of God, who in this way, as they told their disciples, was pleased to communicate counsel and instruction, and the knowledge of his will to men.

The thirteenth century was distinguished by the appearance of two of the greatest enthusiasts who ever misled or disturbed the world; I mean Dominica Guzman, a Spaniard, and Francis of Italy; the one the founder of the Dominican, the other of the Franciscan friars: who to such a pitch of madness carried their impostures and enthusiasms, that their followers declared them to be equal unto, yea, even greater than Christ himself; and one Bartholomew, of Pifa, actually published a most impious book, entitled, "A conformity between the life of St. Francis and Jesus Christ," in which abominable parallel, the saint is made greatly superior to the Saviour; and it is well known, that though they both pretended to be solely directed by the Lord in all their opinions and proceedings, yet with the most embittered animosity and spiritual jealousy, they and their followers persecuted each other, as if each had been considered by his rival as the common enemy of mankind.

In the fourteenth century, a set of fanatics arose near Aix-la-Chapelle, in Germany, called Dancers; their tenets are explained by their name. As if by a sudden impulse, a whole company of them would frequently commence a violent motion like a company of dancers, and continue till they dropped down with fatigue, when they asserted that they were favoured with miraculous visions and revelations from God. Every one who is in the least acquainted with the history and corruption of the church of Rome, remembers the fraudulent impostures of which poor Jetzer of Bern was made the dupe, by a tribe of religious jugglers.

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jugglers belonging to the order of St. Dominic, who made that poor illiterate monk believe that the Virgin Mary appeared to him, and instructed him how to settle a dispute between the Franciscans and Dominican friars concerning her immaculate conception. And after having told him how she hated the Franciscans for making her equal with her Son, in order to give a proof of her affection for him and his order, she told Jetzer, that she would imprint on him the five wounds that pierced Jesus on the cross. Accordingly, one of the friars, who had all the while personated the Virgin, took the poor fanatic's hand by force, and struck a large nail through it, which threw him into the greatest agony. But after playing off these tricks almost every night, the matter was at length so grossly over-acted, that, simple as Jetzer was, he at last discovered it, and had almost killed the friar who appeared to him as the Virgin Mary, with a crown on her head. The consequence was, that the church of Rome was so ashamed of this scandalous affair, when it came to be exposed, that the four friars were degraded from their priesthood, and actually burnt alive on the last day of May, 1509*.

A little after this, two Dutch mechanics, possessed with the rage of making profelytes, fixed their residence in Munster, an imperial city of Westphalia; where, after working up the minds of their followers to a pitch of unparalleled madness, by their dreams, visions, and pretended revelations, they actually drove the magistrates and senate out of the city; and one of them, after having by obscure visions and prophecies, prepared the multitude for some extraordinary event, stript himself naked, and marched through the streets, proclaiming with a loud voice—"That the kingdom of Zion was at hand, that what ever was highest on earth should be brought low, and what ever was lowest should be exalted." In order to fulfil this, he commanded the churches, as the most lofty buildings in the city, to be levelled with the ground; and having called the multitude together, by the assistance of a prophet whom he had tutored for the purpose, they declared that it was the will of God that John Boccold should be king of Sion, and sit on the throne of David. John, kneeling down, accepted of the heavenly call, which he solemnly declared had been revealed likewise to himself, and was immediately acknowledged as monarch by the deluded multitude; but this successor of David soon ended his reign, prophecies, and existence, a miserable victim to fanaticism and imposture †.

In

* Hottenger Hist. Helv. Burnet's Travels.

† Gregory.

In the last century, Mrs. Bourignon, a French visionary, honoured the world with some special revelations, which she pretended to have received. Several of her predictions and visions have been published, and have had their share of admirers for a season. A new sect, so late as the year 1774, called Shakers, was instituted under the patronage of a Mrs. Anna Leese, whom they style (and she asserts herself to be) the elect lady spoken of in the twelfth chapter of the revelations, and that she speaks with seventy-two tongues, and though these tongues are unintelligible to the living, she converses with the dead, who understand her language. She is the mother of all the elect, and she travails for the whole world; in fine, no blessing can descend to any person, but only by and through her*. These are but as it were a specimen of the great numbers of prophets, prophetesses, apostles, seers, and dreamers, which have in the different ages of Christianity obtruded their impostures and absurdities on the world, as the oracles of God, and have been the unhappy instruments of perverting many weak and ignorant minds from the simplicity of the gospel of Christ, and have thereby exposed it to the ridicule and derision of its enemies, to the no small triumph of the learned infidel, and heart-felt regret of its sincerest friends.

Among the number of those who have laid claim to inspiration, the name of EMANUEL SWEDENBORG claims a distinguished place.

This gentleman tells us, that for twenty-seven years he has, like Enoch, walked with God, and has received from him such discoveries concerning heaven and hell, as eye has not seen, nor ear heard. Such discoveries as none ever had before, nor will ever have after him. For "the Lord," says he, "appeared to me in London, and said, I am God the Lord, the Creator and Redeemer; I have chosen thee to explain to men the internal and spiritual sense of the sacred writings; I will dictate to thee what thou ought to write." And that we might at no time hesitate, or be in suspense whether he says any thing of himself, or by special revelation, he tells us, "I am but a secretary, who write from what is dictated to my spirit †." This account is very plausible, but as we know not at all times what manner of spirits we are of, and as a spirit

* Gregory.

† See anecdotes annexed to Mr. Sandal's eulogium on Mr. Swedenborg.

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of delusion, as well as of truth, is apt to possess the minds of men, it is the business of every one to whom these subaltern prophets or apostles make a tender of their instructions, to withhold their belief from their testimony, till they have tried them by the touch-stone of reason and revelation; till, like the Bereans, they have searched diligently whether these things be so*, for, "to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them†." This is not merely a prudential maxim, but an apostolical injunction, for we are expressly commanded "not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they are of God;" and this reason is assigned for our not giving implicit credit to every one who affects to be led by the spirit, "because many false prophets are gone out into the world‡."

This being the case, the friends and followers of Baron Swedenborg, (many of whom, I believe, are serious and well-meaning people) cannot be offended with us (who still remain attached to the old church) for examining, in the most minute and particular manner, whether or not there be in the Baron's theology, such traces of a new dispensation from God to men, as will justify our forsaking the common faith and expositions of revelation, and adhere to this new system, which the Baron says he was divinely commissioned to reveal to the world.

Three objects of enquiry naturally present themselves to the minds of every one who either hears or reads the Baron's pretensions to new revelations. 1st. Does it appear from *scripture*, that any new dispensation, or any new revelations are promised, either to supercede the old, or to be a supplement to the writings and doctrines of Christ and his apostles? 2d. Does it appear from *reason* that such a new dispensation is wanted, that the old is imperfect, and that were a new and more ample discovery of God's will to be made to the world, it would effectually remove those *evils* and *falses*, which the Baron says, every where abounds at this day? 3dly, If it should appear, that new revelations are both promised in scripture, and wanted in reason, amidst the numerous candidates for this honour, who have appeared since the commencement of Christianity, how shall we distinguish the enthusiast, who canonizes his own reveries, as the oracles of God, from the anointed prophet, who speaks forth the words of soberness and truth? or how shall we distinguish the designing impostor from him

* Acts xvii. 11.

* Isaiah viii. 20.

‡ 1 John iv. 1.

him who is actually appointed of God as the messenger to reveal this third, last, and greatest discovery of the Almighty to the children of men?

When we begin to examine the credibility of the gospel, and its divine author, we find it foretold by the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, that such a wonderful person as Jesus Christ should actually come into the world. The time when he should appear, the manner of his birth, the place where he should be born, the sufferings and troubles of his life, the circumstances of his death, and the effects of his doctrine, were all pointed out and foretold long before the advent of the Son of God. So that, after searching the scriptures with impartiality, and by comparing the life and doctrines of Jesus with the signs that had been given concerning him, his friends became convinced that he of whom Moses and the prophets had spoken was actually come, and that Christ was the identical person of whom the scriptures testified. For it is evident that all the Jewish nation expected a great prophet from God, whom they were to hear in all things *; that they looked for one who should come †; and that they waited for the salvation of God; and that when Christ the Messiah should come, he would teach them all things ‡. Thus it appears that both the Old Testament foretold, and the pious and learned Jews expected, that God would visit his people by raising up for them an horn of salvation, in the house of his servant David ¶, as he had spoken and foretold by the mouth of his holy prophets.

Let us now see whether or not the New Testament gives us any reason to expect a third and still greater discovery of the divine will than we have yet been already favoured with in the two former dispensations. For this both the Baron and his friends would have us to believe; for says one of them ||, "the churches which have hitherto existed, have had their morning, their mid-day, their evening, and night. Thus the Adamical churches, the Noahical, and the Israelitish churches have had their existence, but are now no more, and the Christian church has passed through its morning, mid-day, evening, and is now come to its night." From this declaration it would appear, that as the Christian church was considerably different from the Israelitish

* Deut. xviii. 15. † Mat. xi. 3. ‡ John iv. 25. ¶ Luke i. 69.

|| See Mr. Proud's Sermon on New Jerusalem blessings, p. 19. Upon looking a second time into the Baron's works, I find Mr. Proud has borrowed this prophecy from the Universal Theology, No. 753, &c.

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raelitish, so will the New Jerusalem church differ essentially from the Christian dispensation. But it appears very strange to us, who are members of the old church, that we should discern no promise of this new church, and new teacher, in the doctrines of Christ, nor the writings of his apostles. In opposition to every new system that may be intruded upon us as divine, we are commanded to hold fast the form of sound words which we have heard*; and that for the obstinate there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; and that if an angel from heaven, much less a mortal creature like ourselves, should preach any other gospel than what the apostles have preached unto us, the malediction of heaven would rest upon him†; and that under whatever pretence he, who sets up his own declarations and doctrines as the revelations of God, and thereby adds to God's word, already complete, God would add unto him the plagues or curses that are written in his word‡. Under such an awful sanction as this, the friends of Christianity ought to be extremely cautious how they listen to the pretences of those, who, not satisfied with what God has already revealed, are for adding something more to the sacred code, as if it were not sufficient of itself to answer all the wise purposes of God in preparing us for his blessed kingdom.

We are indeed told that many would come in the name of Christ, speaking lies in hypocrisy; that many false Christs ¶, and false prophets would arise, and that false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ; and our blessed Saviour, foreseeing that many would arise, boasting and puffing off themselves, as persons of great importance, cautions us to beware of false prophets §, who come unto us in sheep's clothing, lest by looking at the dignity of their rank, or the exterior sanctity of their conduct, and their gravely and repeatedly asserting their inspirations and intercourse with God, or angels, we should be led from the simplicity of his word, to credit their visionary doctrines, instead of that revelation, which is more careful

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* 2 Tim. i. 13. † Gal. i. 9. ‡ Rev. xxii. 18. ¶ Mat. xxiv. 24.
2 Cor. xi, 13.

§ If the man who denies the plainest declarations and doctrines which Christ taught, such as a resurrection of all that are in their graves, and who pretends to know those things of which the very angels in heaven are ignorant, and Christ himself had no commission to reveal; if such persons as these be not false prophets, it matters little whether we follow Zoroaster in Persia, Confucius in China, Mahomet in Turkey, or Jesus Christ in Europe; as none of them differ more widely from each other than the revelations of Christ, and the visions of Mr. Swedenborg.

to regulate our life and conduct in this world, than to satisfy our curiosity concerning the marriages, houses, and angels that are in the other. Indeed, in every place of the New Testament, where mention is made of new Christs, new apostles, new prophets, and new revelations, we are solemnly admonished to flee from them, to rebuke them sharply, and to contend earnestly for the faith (and nothing but the faith) once delivered to the saints.

How remarkable must it then be, that if the birth of Isaac, of Sampson, of Josiah, of Cyrus, of John the Baptist, and of Jesus Christ, should all be expressly foretold by God in scripture, that no hints should have been suggested concerning the birth nor advent of so wonderful a person as Mr. Swedenborg. Still more strange, that the captivity of the Jews, the rebuilding of their temple, the degradation of Nebuchadnezzar, and the final dispersion of the posterity of Jacob, should have been so accurately predicted, and yet this new apostle, and his doctrines, who, as his followers say, was as much commissioned by the Lord, as John the Baptist was, should never have been foretold in the scripture; nor can any of those texts which they apply to themselves, be more applicable to their church, than to the followers of Count Zindendorff, Mr. Wesley, Mr. Hutcheson, Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Barclay, or the head of any other sect or party, who may have vanity and confidence enough to appropriate such passages to themselves, and their adherents. We conclude then, that the scriptures give us no more warrant to expect a new church, and a new apostle, in the person and writings of Baron Swedenborg, than in the person of Mahomet, and writings of the Turkish Koran.

Nor does our reason any more suggest the necessity of farther discoveries from God, than his former revelations have given us warrant to expect: indeed the vanity of being thought wise above what is written, and the attachment which many have to the marvellous and surprising, often induce people of that turn of mind to credit the most unintelligible and inconsistent absurdities, and the less they can comprehend of them, the more they think they are edified thereby. It was an impertinent curiosity of this kind that subverted our first parents from the path of innocence; not satisfied with the measure of knowledge which their Maker had assigned them, they wanted to be like Gods, knowing good and evil. It is true they did obtain more knowledge by the experiment, but it was only the knowledge of their own sin and misery. The question, therefore

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therefore, is not what measure of knowledge the human mind would wish to possess, but whether or not God has revealed sufficient information of our duty, so as that by a due attention thereunto we shall attain a blessed immortality in the life which is to come.

If to live soberly, righteously, and godly, be the whole duty of man, then every thing needful for the attainment of this invaluable end is to be found in the scriptures; there the most affectionate love to God, and our neighbour, is most frequently and fervently recommended; there the best instructions for self-government are to be found; there the strongest reasons for trust in God, through Christ Jesus, are held forth; there the greatest encouragement against despondency in trouble is afforded us; there the vanity and allurments of this present life are painted forth in their native colours; and there the good man finds an exhilarating comfort, when the evening of life approaches, in the prospect of enjoying the full possession of that blessed kingdom which God has prepared for them that love him. So profitable for the life that now is, and that which is to come, are the precepts of piety and virtue which the scriptures lay before us.

But supposing that the scriptures had promised us at some future period a greater revelation from God than we enjoy at present, surrounded as we are by so many candidates for this honour, whose message shall we deem to be canonical? We have the respective claims of a Basilides, a Montanus, a Mahomet, a Francis, a Behmen, a Bourignon, a Buchan, a Leese, a Zindendorf, and a Swedenborg to examine. And as they have all had their admirers and followers, who have believed them to be inspired, although their inspirations and dogmas have been as opposite to each other, as light and darkness; how shall we, that are unconnected with either party, be able to ascertain whether or not a new prophet or apostle speaketh of himself, or by the Lord.

The only way then to judge of the credibility of Mr. Swedenborg's last and greatest discoveries, is by the documents and evidences which have established and confirmed us in the belief of the Jewish and Christian dispensations, I mean—the evidence of miracles.

It was on this foundation that the Jewish and Christian churches were built; for their respective founders well knew, that amidst the many frauds and impostors to which men were exposed, unless they had attested their commissions by doing works which no man could do but by the finger of God, they could never have had a greater

greater claim on the faith of the world, than the vast numbers of those who by fraud and fiction have deluded mankind. If six men were to stand before you, and declare by the most solemn asseverations, that they have been in heaven, and favoured with special revelations from God, and yet these revelations, like Montanus's, St. Francis's, Peter the Hermit's, Mahomet's, Mrs. Leese's, and Mr. Swedenborg's, &c. &c. were all contradicting each other, pray how would you act in such a situation? Would you believe the most learned man? then you must believe Simon Mugus, and reject St. Peter, for I verily believe that Simon the forcerer was by far a better scholar than the apostle, for the one spent his time in reading magic books, and the other the greatest part of his life in mending nets, baiting hooks, and catching fish. Would you believe the most holy man? that might be a point not easily ascertained, a point, I am afraid, which none can decide, but he who searcheth the heart, and seeth not as man seeth. But if by that phrase you mean the person in whom you should discern the greatest symptoms of zeal, self-denial, poverty, humility, and all for the sake of the gospel, *i.e.* to persuade people to believe and follow him, then I should believe Peter the Hermit, sooner than any mere human being I ever read of; for in the eleventh century, fired with a holy indignation and furious zeal, which he considered as the effects of a divine impulse, he went through all the countries of Europe, preaching; his diet was abstemious, his prayers long and fervent, and the alms which he received with one hand, he distributed with the other, his head was bare, his feet naked, his meagre body was wrapt in a coarse garment, he carried a weighty crucifix before him, he preached to innumerable crowds in churches, the streets, and the highways, his sighs, and tears, and ejaculations, moved every heart who heard him, and Peter supplied the deficiency of reason by loud and frequent appeals to Christ and his mother, to the saints and the angels in paradise, with whom he pretended to have personally conversed; and he carried about a letter with him, which he affirmed was written in heaven, and addressed to all true Christians, to animate their zeal to enlist in the first crusade against the Turks in Palestine*.

This is the man whom I would soonest credit, if exterior sanctity, self-denial, and holy zeal, were to be considered as the criterion for judging of heavenly guests or inspired teachers; but the misery of this mission and letter

* See Mosheim, or Gregory's Church History, the eleventh century.

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letter of Peter's, was, that it terminated in the total ruin of those who were foolish enough to be the dupes of his enthusiasm, for the most of those who went against the Turks were cut to pieces by those warlike barbarians. But perhaps you would believe the person with whose writings or pretences you were best acquainted, and this I suppose is the reason why many modern prophets and apostles are credited by their admirers; but if this proves any thing at all, it proves too much, for it proves that every enthusiastic preacher or writer, is right, providing he can get but one hearer or reader to believe him, however contradictory his tenets may be to reason or common sense. Supposing, for instance, a person to have read Mr. Swedenborg's memorable relations, he thinks within himself this man appears a learned, pious, and wonderful person, he certainly would not have forged these visions, consequently I ought to believe them; but I would ask this reader, is Mr. Swedenborg the only pretender to memorable relations? if you say yes, then you betray your want of knowledge in the history of the Christian church; and of the various methods which ambition and fanaticism have used to impose on the credulity of mankind.

If you allow that he is not the only one that lays claim to inspiration, and a special commission from God, then how comes he to be entitled to the pre-eminence? or were the pretensions of all the rest equally as good as his, if that be the case, how is it that their tenets and revelations so flatly contradict each other? why does the doctrines of his cotemporary and noble colleague Count Zindendorff so much differ from the Baron's about faith and charity? would God have given a special commission to each of these gentlemen, so very opposite to each other? what would we think of a human prince, who would dispatch two ambassadors to a foreign court, on the same expedition, and when they produced their credentials they should be found directly contrary to each other, while at the same time each of them solemnly declared that his commission was written and signed by his royal master's own hand? is God, think you, a God of disorder and confusion? would he inspire one man* to declare to the world, that they are all a troop of legalists, and enemies to the gospel, who in whole or in part seek to join the works of the law, and the faith of Christ together; and another† to declare, that the old church is now wholly rejected of God, because its members and creeds have for this long time been asserting justification

* Zindendorff.

† Swedenborg.

tification by faith alone? Or do you believe the Baron because you think he is right, and all the pretensions of the rest are false? but how do you prove that? is he learned? so are many of them; is he noble? so was Count Zindendorff; is he a voluminous writer? so is the noble Count also; is it because he has many followers? so has Count Zindendorff and Jacob Behmen; or is it because you think him the most consistent, clear, and perspicuous writer that ever you read? then I pledge myself to demonstrate, in its proper place, that he is one of the most unintelligible and contradictory authors that ever laid the fruits of a distempered imagination before the publick. But I am of opinion, that of nine-tenths of those who believe the Baron's works, had they lived in the age or neighbourhood where any of those fanatics have exhibited, already mentioned, and not known the Baron, they would have as strenuously contended for their visions and revelations, as they do for his at this day. Had they been acquainted with Mrs. Leese*, it is highly probable they had been Shakers; had they read Madam Bourignon's *Light in Darkness*, they would have cried out, "Madam, we will follow you whithersoever you go;" had they perused Jacob Behmen's *Arora*, they would have turned Behmenites; and it is more than probable, that even yet, were they to frequent the meetings, and peruse the books belonging to the Moravian brethren, they would soon maintain that God raised up Count Zindendorff, and honoured him as the instrument for fixing a *new period* in his church, as the Count calls the commencement of his theological labours.

Indeed it would be endless to trace all the meandrings and evasions of those who have every reason to assign but the right one, for believing the pretended revelations and heavenly communications of every enthusiast or impostor, whose writings or followers chance may fling in their way.

To come from God with a message to the world, is a very serious and important errand; and while I believe it possible for man to deceive himself as well as others in a business of such magnitude, I would believe no one's

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* On obtaining a more intimate acquaintance with the Baron's followers, I can easily account for the attachment of many of them to his writings; they have had from their infancy a predilection to the marvellous and surprising, and are but old turncoats from those enthusiasts, Bourignon, Leese, and Behmen, and perhaps for no other reason, but because the Baron's system has more novelty, and more unintelligibility in it than either of his mystical predecessors. and consequently his admirers conclude he is more for their edification.

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verbal assertion, without the concurring testimony of such miracles as God has always granted to those whose revelations and doctrine he designed as the heralds of his will and pleasure to mankind.

Let us attend for a while to the manner in which God invested his prophets and servants with those commissions which he authorized them to execute in his name.

To satisfy Moses that God's appearing to him was no delusion of his mind, and also to render his person and message respected, he required and obtained of the Lord a sign, that is, a miracle, as a testimony of his being divinely appointed to his office, accordingly his rod, on his throwing it to the ground, was instantly changed into a serpent; this convinced himself, and he was ordered to shew the same sign to his countrymen, and to Pharaoh, for their conviction likewise *. When Gideon was charged with a special commission from God, although he had seen the angel of the Lord bring fire out of a rock by the end of his staff, yet he still required a sign more satisfactory to convince him that it was the Spirit of God, and not a spirit of delusion, that urged him to an expedition against Midian †. Accordingly, on his request at one time, a fleece of wool was bedewed in the morning, while all the earth was dry around it, and next morning, as a further confirmation, the fleece was dry only, and there was dew on all the ground.

When God raised up the prophet Elijah (just as the Baron says he has been raised up, in the evening of the old or Christian church) at that time divine knowledge was almost entirely extinguished in Palestine, just as the knowledge of Christ, to use the Baron's spiritual complaint, is now lost in Europe. But how did Elijah persuade them that he was a teacher sent from God to reform them; not by telling long stories about Predestinarian churches in hell, and kings of kings, and emperors of emperors, lodging there in palaces of palaces; nor of troops of wicked spirits leaving the hells in scouting parties to plunder the heavens ‡. No; this might do very well for popish legends, Mahomet's delusions, Ovid's metamorphosis, the Arabian nights entertainments, or Mr. Swedenborg's memorable relations. But Elijah convinced the Jews by appeals to visible and existing facts, by shutting the heavens for three years and six months from raining, by raising

* Exod. iv. 1. &c.

† Judges vi. 37, &c.

‡ Such are the discoveries of the Baron in some of his celestial and internal excursions. See Universal Theology, No. 185, &c.

raising the dead to life, by bringing fire from heaven on his sacrifices and his enemies, in the presence of thousands. These were divine works, confirming and accompanying a divine testimony, and will be believed in the church of God, when time shall have consigned to oblivion and contempt all the impostors and enthusiasts in the world.

Now has the Baron produced any documents like these in confirmation of his visions and inspirations? No such things! Has he ever, like Moses, turned his staff into a serpent, water into blood, or noon-day into midnight darkness? When he lived with the old woman, his gardener's wife *, as Elijah did with the widow of Sarepta, did he ever make an handful of meal, and a cruse of oil, serve him and his housekeeper for a series of years? or when he was at last finally taken to the *spiritual world*, has he dropt his mantle on some Elifha, who continues by virtue of his cloak, and a double portion of his spirit, to do the same mighty works among us, which none could do, except God was with him? Even Jesus Christ himself did not expect to be believed upon his mere word, when he declared that he came from God. In confirmation of his doctrine, he raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and expelled the most malignant and chronical distempers by a word of his mouth. Nor were his apostles less careful to confirm their mission, by doing the works, as well as speaking the words of God. Did not Peter and John cure a man lame from his birth, only by commanding him in the name of Jesus to arise and walk †? and did not Paul in confirmation of his being chosen of God, strike Elymas the forcerer blind, for speaking against his gospel ‡? But why need I multiply particulars, were not all the apostles enabled to speak in the provincial language of every country wherever they had occasion to preach the gospel, as a proof of their being sent of God, and invested with sufficient authority to speak in his name.

Are there any signs of apostleship like these to be seen in Baron Swedenborg? wherein are his pretensions to inspiration a whit better than any of those impostors whom every sober person considers as the deceivers of mankind? Indeed the Baron seems to be aware of this objection to his pretensions, and in one of

* See anecdotes annexed to Mr. Sandal's eulogium on the Baron.

† Acts iii. 1.

‡ Acts xiii. 8, 9, 10.

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his spiritual dialogues, it was retorted upon him (see Universal Theology, No. 849) "Do miracles, and we will believe;" but he made the same reply to this antagonist in the spiritual world, that he made to one in the natural world (see Eulogium on Mr. Swedenborg, by Sandal, p. 42) "that at this day no signs nor miracles will be given, because they operate only on an outward dead belief, and do not avail so as to convince the inward state of the mind; agreeable to the state of free-will given by our Lord, as the proper means of his regeneration, and that miracles only operate on the exterior faith, or belief," says he, "may be seen from the little effect they had on the people of Egypt, and the children of Israel in the desert, and the miracles of our Saviour." Alas! master, this excuse is borrowed. For the Baron's predecessor and fellow-labourer in the vineyard of visions, Mahomet, made the same evasions when pressed to adduce this evidence in proof of his mission. "As your forefathers," says that impostor, "contemned the miracles of Moses and the prophets, God will work no more among them." But a little after this we find him altering his tone. For having got a sword in his hand, and an army at his back, his doctrine then was, that God had sent Moses and Jesus with miracles, and yet men would not be obedient to their word, and therefore he had now sent him in the last place without miracles, to force them by the power of the sword to do his will (see Dr. Perdeaux's Life of Mahomet, p. 30, 31, 32). But to drop this parallel between the prophet of Mecca, and our new apostle, let us examine the validity of his own excuses as they lie before us: "Miracles operate only on an outward dead belief." If miracles in themselves are so perfectly useless, why did God empower Moses and Christ to work them? was it only to see what effects they would produce on those who saw them? and seeing that they did not answer the ends expected by them, has the Almighty by experience become wiser, and come to a resolution to lay them aside? does not such reasoning as this import an imperfection in him who is perfect in knowledge, and to whom all his works are known from the foundation of the world? They argue very much beside the question who alledge, that the miracles of Moses and Jesus Christ had but little effect in the world; they certainly to every fair and impartial inquirer afforded the means of solid conviction, that those whom God honoured with the power of doing works which no mortal man can do, must bear a divine commission from

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God, in what they said, as well as in what they did in his name, and thus upon rational evidence and ocular demonstration, the faith of the first Jews and primitive Christians, was established both in Moses and in Christ; yea further, such miracles perfectly silenced and rendered quite inexcusable such persons, as through prejudice or sinful passions refused to examine, and consequently to believe the truth of their missions, by their miracles; and to this class of persons our Saviour alludes, when he says, (John xv. 24.) "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin."

So that the miracles of Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, as they convince us that their mission was from God, so they remain as an everlasting caveat and warning to guard us against believing the pretensions of any one, who, while he pretends to have a special commission from God, in divine words, is not able to verify it by divine works.

But this objection of the Baron's may be considered in another light. When he says, "miracles operate only on an outward dead faith," does he mean that all those who believed, and still continue to believe, the reality of these miracles, have only but an outward and dead faith? Few, I hope, are so grossly mistaken as to think that merely to believe Christ as a teacher sent from God, from the evidence of those miracles which he wrought, is sufficient to make us real Christians; but certainly it is the first preliminary step towards doing whatsoever things he commands us, when we are persuaded in our own mind that he has a just right to command us. My believing that the king is my lawful sovereign, does not constitute me a loyal subject, but certainly it must precede my giving dutiful allegiance to his authority. So that the Baron confounds distinct ideas, or rather expresses no idea at all, when he says "miracles operate only on an outward and dead faith." True, had Christ done nothing among us but wrought miracles, our faith in those miracles would only been an outward or dead faith, or to speak a little more explicitly, we would have only believed that about eighteen centuries ago there was a wonderful man in the world, who showed us a great many mighty works which God could do, but never told us what we should do ourselves. Herein the evidences of Christianity and Swedenborgianism essentially differ; the Author of Christianity, and his system, was foretold at sundry
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times, and in divers manners, by the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, long before he appeared to establish his doctrines among men; and when he did appear, far from commanding implicit obedience to his verbal pretences, he appealed to the ancient prophecies, and compared them with the great and notable miracles which he wrought, and then requested men of understanding and impartiality to draw the inference.

But the author of Swedenborgianism rushes at once upon us, like a thief in the night, and without any previous warning of the coming of such a wonderful personage, attempts to scare us as it were into a belief of his *scriptures*, by threatening us with expulsion from heaven, till we acknowledge them to be canonical, and without one single evidence but his mere *ipse dixit*, would have us, in defiance of our senses, in opposition to the order uniformly observed by God in the Old and New Testament, to believe that all his doctrines (or, as he frequently calls it, his *arcana*) was written in heaven, as well as by himself*.

But if miracles only operate on a dead faith, have all those a living faith who believe the Baron's visions, without the evidence of miracles to confirm them? Their faith I make no doubt may be *internal* and *lively* enough in crediting all that he has written, but I am much afraid that the faith of many of them, like the faith of some of us in the old church, is not altogether of the operation of God.

But he says, "miracles carry compulsion with them, and take away a man's free-will in spiritual matters." I do not know how free-will can be applied to the believing the truth of any proposition. I always thought that the understanding directed the will in these cases, and not the will the understanding, and that the understanding was directed according to the perception of those evidences by which a proposition is demonstrated: for instance, can my will resist believing that grass is green, when my sense of seeing tells me it is so? or can my free-will resist believing that fire is hot, when my sense of feeling assures me of it? A man can no more will as he pleases, in receiving or rejecting the truth of a proposition, than he can look as he pleases, or be as high as he pleases; for if by the will, the Baron means, the assent of the mind, that cannot be refused, where there appears sufficient evidence to convince it, whatever improper motives

* See Universal Theology, No. 848. We shall favour this number with a second glance by and by.

tives may attempt to seduce the affections from truth, where the understanding leads, the will must in some measure follow. For example, my free-will is at perfect liberty to believe all the Baron's memorable relations, providing my judgment was satisfied with the evidence by which they are supported. My will, if I am sincerely seeking after truth, has nothing to do in the matter, but my judgment and my understanding. But as my judgment and my understanding, after examining the Baron's visions with a considerable degree of attention, does not approve of them for want of miracles, as well as for want of other internal evidences, I hope my free-will is as much in the exercise of all its functions at this moment for rejecting, as any of the Baron's followers are, who receive every word that he has written. Yea I believe that the free-will of the Jews, after they saw Moses' miracles, and the apostles, after they saw and believed Christ's, were just as unshackled, and possessed the same faculties, as before; and that the natural powers of the human mind are just the very same in *the old church*, as in *the new*, the same this day, as they were in the days of Moses or of Christ.

Upon the whole it appears to me that Mr. Swedenborg was no more commissioned by God to deliver these visions of his to the world, than he was commissioned by the Grand Turk to deliver letters of credentials as his ambassador to the king of England, in whose metropolis he died. Indeed it would be paying the Baron too great a compliment, or any man, or any angel, to believe their unsupported testimony, as being messengers from God to men, about the great and important concerns of eternity, without bringing the same documents and credentials with them that Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles produced, and which I firmly believe God would have given to the Baron, if ever he had employed him on such an embassy, and which I as firmly believe the Baron would have gladly exercised, if he had possessed the power to exhibit them.



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S E C T. II.

*Containing Remarks on the Baron's Cabalistical *
mode of expounding the Scriptures.*

WHEN we sit down and seriously consider the figures, idioms, and style of Scripture-language, we shall find that the sources from which most of the streams of error have flowed into Christianity, have arisen from too great an attachment to the literal sense of scripture on the one hand, and too much fondness for the metaphorical and figurative on the other. To the first of these extremes we are indebted for a great part of those errors which popery and priestcraft have introduced into the church, and unto the second we owe that deluge of nonsense which fanciful and enthusiastic persons have made the scriptures to speak; so that the significations which this class of expositors have put on the Word of God, have been as contrary to each other, as they have been to common sense and sound criticism. What but a too rigid adherence to the letter of scripture has made some men think that bread was flesh, and that transubstantiation was true, because Christ once said of a bit of bread, this is my body, though they might have as well believed that a candlestick was a church, because Christ once said—"the seven candlesticks are seven churches." L'Enfant tells us that pope John, in his bull against the Wickliffites, justified the burning of heretics in this form. "We ordain that they be publickly burned in execution of the sentence of our Saviour (John xv. 6) "if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered,

* Cabala is the name of a mysterious kind of science among the Jews, feigned to have been delivered by revelation to their forefathers, and transmitted by oral tradition to the present times, and serving for the interpretation of the books both of nature and scripture. The Jewish cabalists and modern mystics, such as Bheman, Bourignon, and the Baron, seem to be nearly akin to each other.

withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned *." And Besnage informs us, that altars made of stone in the sixth century were erected in the churches, and this reason was assigned for it, because Jesus Christ himself is called the *corner-stone* and foundation of the churches†. And the Jumpers in Ireland and Wales justified their leaping and shouting in the time of divine service, from a verse in the Psalms, "rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous;" and from a passage in one of the prophets, where, in the figurative language of prophecy, "the trees of the forest are represented as clapping their hands. ‡" And our Saviour once saying that some men made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, induced the pious, but mistaken Origen, to emasculate himself.

It must not, however, be concealed, that the opposite extreme has produced consequences no less dangerous and absurd. Some by indulging their fancies, have seen a whole system of divinity in one short sentence; others have seen the deepest mystery in the plainest historical fact; some have thought that a simple moral precept contained a dark and hidden enigma, never understood, till they discovered it. Some have fancied that they saw original sin in the man that fell among the thieves, that they saw the ceremonial law in the Levite that passed by; the moral law in the priest, and Christ in the Samaritan. They have found conviction in the oil, and conversion in the wine, which that benevolent man poured into his wounds, and they have been ingenious enough to find imputed righteousness in the Samaritan's placing the wounded man on his own beast. They have discovered the church in the inn, the two sacraments in the two-pence, the ministers of the gospel in the landlord, and Christ's second coming at the last day in the Samaritan's returning to the inn, and the reward which faithful ministers shall receive from Christ in the host being paid what additional expences he might be at on account of his wounded guest. Thus has the most beautiful moral for inculcating universal benevolence among men, the most effectual antidote against bigotry and narrow-hearted prejudices, and the most affecting instance of a good man considering every creature in distress as having a claim

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* His. Con. Pisa.

† Besnage, v. 2. p. 47.

‡ Hampson's Life of Wesley.

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on his compassion, been explained away, and entirely overlooked by a puerility of fancy, and foolish attachment to favourite ideas and particular phrases, which some think could never be maintained, if we did not squeeze them out of every historical fact, parabolical instruction, or figurative expression in the Bible. Some * have seen "the power of faith in Moses' rod, while it was in his hand, and the same divine power immersed in the things of this world, flesh and sense, when the rod become a serpent, and by the serpent's becoming a rod again, they have seen the elevation of the sensual principle through the power of the divine." What solemn trifling is this! Just as if a man could not fall into immoralities, and by the grace of God and his own reflections, recover himself therefrom, without bringing a miracle which God wrought merely to convince Moses that he was divinely appointed to deliver Israel, without bringing this miracle to inform the backslider of his ruin and recovery.

It would make one smile to see how many mysteries and different senses some eagle-eyed divines find in the parable of the woman's leavening the three measures of meal.

* See Sermons of a gentleman well known for his zealous attachment to the Swedenborgian system, p. 42. ¶ Although I may have occasion again to allude to what I deem a perversion of the Word of God in this gentleman's discourses; yet far be it from my mind to blend the integrity of his heart, with the puerile and fanciful ideas of his head: From the best information I can obtain, his piety to God, and benevolence to man, would do honour to a better cause than translating and publishing such antichristian tenets and fabulous stories, as Baron Swedenborg has spun out of his distempered brain. Sincerity and virtue shall always be revered by me, whatever superstitious or enthusiastic incumbrances they may be clogged with.

Is it not astonishing to think that any man pretending to illustrate the Word of God, should so violently drag this passage from its obvious design, to speak a language never intended by the Almighty to be conveyed by it. Can the convictions of any man's understanding, not merely guided by caprice and whim, dictate to him any other reason for God's turning Moses' rod into a serpent, than to convince him and Pharaoh that he had a divine commission to that prince? By what canon in criticism can this gentleman say that God designed this passage to teach his church the power of faith at one time exerting itself, and at another immersed in things of this world. Was he afraid, that if this cabalistical discovery had not been pointed out, we should have known nothing about the power of faith, or its being overcome by flesh and sense? But when we want to know the power of faith, we can turn to the 11th of the Hebrews instead of Moses' rod, and when we want to see its temporary obstructions, when immersed in flesh and sense, we can look at David on his house top, or St. Peter in the high priest's hall, without torturing our imaginations, and the Word of God, to find out enigmas and mysteries in the plainest passages of sacred history.

meal. Some† of them have found the three constituent parts of man, will, understanding, and action; others have seen faith, hope, and charity; some the spiritual world, angelic world, and natural world; some have found in this good woman's three measures of meal, the three periods of the world, before the law, under the law, and under the gospel; and thus by hunting after mysteries, where not the shadow of one is to be found, the plain moral and design of the parable is kept out of sight, and instead of pointing out the wonderful power and providence of God, who from the weakest origin, and by the most simple means, established and instantly spread the gospel of Christ, the speedy propagation of which is fitly compared to the swelling of leavened dough; instead of leading our thoughts to this pleasing and useful reflection, our fancies are amused by showing us how many triple mysteries may be found in the three measures of meal, which has as little to do with the design of the parable, as how many changes may be rung on three bells. The end of the parable would have been equally answered, whether our Saviour had mentioned three measures, thirteen, or thirty-three. So that attempting to make us believe that three measures of meal signify the will, understanding, and action of man, is as fanciful and ridiculous, as to say that they meant the ploughing, sowing, and reaping of the field where they grew.

These and an hundred such-like whims have the scriptures been forced to countenance by the internal, spiritual, angelical, and celestial expositions of some of their readers, who have never considered what was the proper key for opening up and expounding aright the Word of God.

The Bible is a miscellaneous book, written at different times, by different persons, in different countries, on different occasions, and in different languages. A book, not of philosophy and metaphysics, but of religion and morality; a book, containing a body of laws or precepts, for the regulation of men's conduct in matters of religion; a book, like all other ancient and oriental writings, abounding with types, parables, metaphors, allegories, allusions, inferences, and figures, which need only to be well compared one with another, and then to be explained in the same manner that we would explain any other antient Greek or Roman author. For can it be supposed when God Almighty commanded his will to be written for the use of man, he intended it not to

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† The same discourses, p. 160.

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be understood, or its real meaning to be concealed for thousands of years after it was written. Or that when he makes use of human language to instruct babes and sucklings (that is, the ignorant and unlearned) he should choose to speak in riddles, enigmas, and mysteries, without any literal or grammatical criterion by which his words may be understood. It is said that the priests of Delphos, uttering for the most part their oracles in mean and doggerel poetry, gave rise to a saying among the ancients, that Homer could write better verses than Apollo who inspired him; and surely such Christians, who darken and perplex the plainest moral precept in the Bible, by loading it with mystery and allegory, give even in our day reason to suggest, that, according to their scheme, a code of laws, written by the attorney-general, for the regulation of our conduct, would be far more clear and intelligible, than those which the Bible contains *. Whatever words in the scriptures are not to be understood literally, they are either such as are spoken in a prophetic or poetic manner, or such as would involve a contradiction of other parts more explicit; or they allude to some eastern or local custom at that time, and in those countries perfectly well known.

When our blessed Saviour taught the Jews to put their trust in God, he pointed to the fowls in heaven, and without scanning the mysteries contained in a bird, plainly told them, that if the common parent provided for the support of those creatures, who neither sowed nor gathered into barns, every good christian might be assured that the Divine Providence would so bless his honest endeavours, that he should have food to eat, and raiment to put on. But how contemptible would the scriptures appear, if instead of this simple, but beautiful manner of conveying instruction, a teacher should launch out into the mysteries contained in a bird; that its flying upward signified "the elevation of the sensual principle through the power of the divine," its flying downward, "the divine power immersed and buried in things merely sensual," its flying horizontally, "the medial sense between the spiritual and the natural man," its flying to the southward signifies "evils, and consequent falses," and its flying northward signifies falses, and consequent evils," its flying eastward signifies "the essence of faith, which is charity," and its flying westward signifies "the form of charity, which is faith."

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* Gordon.

How ridiculous does such nonsense as this appear to any sober-minded person ; is not the preacher or writer of such reveries fitter for a Bedlam than a pulpit, who could either betray his own ignorance, or sport with that of his hearers in such a manner?

Similar to these specimens of mystical theology, are the Baron's exposition of the Bible ; for he lays it down as an universal maxim, "that the literal sense of the Word is only the basis, the continent, and the firmament of the spiritual and celestial senses : see Universal Theology, No. 210.

As Mr. Swedenborg is a very voluminous writer, and often repeats one sentence, yea several pages over and over, my readers are not to expect me to give long extracts from his writings, and as he has no criterion, after leaving the literal sense of the scriptures, to try his expositions by, but merely his own postulatums, I shall content myself with giving the reader a sort of analysis of his expositions, and leave him from these to form an idea of the Baron's merits as a commentator, when compared to a Patrick, a Poole, a Henry, or a Whitby.

A specimen of his exposition of the decalogue, with some other favourite terms almost perpetually introduced, to explain every passage in scripture, shall suffice to give the reader an idea of the Baron's mode of expounding Holy Writ. We shall begin with the fourth commandment, which is "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, six days shalt thou labour," &c. By the fourth command, says the Baron (Universal Theology, No. 301) in the natural sense, which is that of the letter, is meant that six days are for man and his labour, and that the seventh is for the Lord. In a spiritual sense is signified the reformation and regeneration of man by the Lord. By six days of labour his warfare against the flesh and its concupiscencies, and at the same time the evils and falses which are suggested to him from hell, and by the seventh his conjunction with the Lord, and regeneration thereby. In a celestial sense it signifies conjunction with the Lord, and its attendant, peace, which consisteth in security against the hells, and the prevention of assaults from the evils and falses thence arising.

Fifth command (Universal Theology, No. 305). By honouring the father and mother, in a natural sense, is meant that children should honour their parents, and obey them, &c. &c. In a spiritual sense it means to revere and love God and the church ; in this sense by
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father is meant God, who is the father of all, and by mother the church. In a celestial sense by father is meant our Lord Jesus Christ, and by mother the communion of saints, whereby is understood his church throughout the whole world.

Sixth command (Doctrine of Life, New Jerusalem, No. 91). Natural murder is taking away life. Spiritual murder all the methods of killing and destroying the souls of men. By celestial murder (or, as he here calls it, supreme murder) is meant to hate the Lord. These three kinds of murder make one, and cohere together.

Seventh command (Doctrine of Life, New Jerusalem, Nos. 100, 101), Natural adultery means whoredom, &c. Spiritual adultery means to adulterate the good things of the Word, and to falsify its truth. Supreme adultery means to deny the Lord's divinity, and to prophane the Word. The natural man knoweth what natural adultery means, but he knoweth not that by committing adultery is meant to adulterate the good things of the Word, and to deny the Lord's divinity: Yet "whoever is principled in natural adultery, is also in spiritual adultery, and *vice versa* *."

Eighth command, theft. "Natural theft means to steal, &c. Spiritual theft means to deprive another of the truths of his faith, and the good things of his charity. Supreme theft means taking away from the Lord what is his, while man attributes to himself what belongs to the Lord †. There are thefts of every kind, and

* If all natural adulterers be celestial adulterers, and vice versa, that is, all celestial adulterers be natural adulterers, then the consequence is, that every one who denies the Lord's divinity, is not only a celestial, but a natural adulterer. Since they cannot be celestial, without being natural adulterers. The obvious inference which we draw from such a memorable relation is this: that the reason why a certain ingenious Doctor, who has lately sent a few admonitory letters to the Baron's followers; the reason why he denies our Lord's divinity must certainly be, that being guilty of celestial a——y, he is guilty of natural a——y also. What a pity that the two gentlemen, who answered his letters, did not give him this hint, for they certainly must believe it. Unfriendly as I am to the celestial a——y of Dr. P. I should be very sorry to charge him with a literal breach of the seventh commandment.

† So! every one that appropriates the merits or righteousness of Christ to himself, or denies his divine humanity, is a literal thief, seeing these three make one. This I take to be a sling at the members of our church, for using the phrases, "Christ's righteousness," or "the imputed righteousness of Christ," and considering this as the ground of our acceptance with God; but as these terms are particularly obnoxious to the Baron, he endeavours to place them in a ridiculous light, by introducing conferences and disputations between their

and the reason why they make one is, because the one is in the other.

The tree of life signifies love. The tree of knowledge, faith. Ten signifies remains. Twelve signifies faith. The length of Noah's ark signifies holiness; breadth, truth; its height, good. The flood, temptation. Husband and wife, evils and falses. Every fowl after its kind, all spiritual truths. By birds, natural truths. Jehovah signifies divine good. God signifies divine truth. Money signifies knowledge of truth in great abundance. Virgins, affections and truths. Women, conjunction of goodness and truth. Elisha signifies the Lord, as to the Word. Bald, the Word in its ultimate, *i. e.* literal sense. Bears, the literal sense separated from the internal sense.—Such a phrase signifies evils, and consequent falses. The next falses, and consequent evils. Christ's coming in the clouds signifies the literal sense of the Word, and in great glory the spiritual sense of the Word. This signifies the goods of charity, and that the truth of faith. This signifies divine truth, that divine truth. Goods of charity, and truths of faith. Faith separate from charity. The Lord in man. Man in the Lord*, &c. &c. &c.

With such phrases as these does the Baron expound scripture, whether it be history, parable, proper names, literal or metaphorical, all are jumbled together in

their advocates, and either himself or angelic spirits, and putting insufficient or ridiculous arguments into the mouth of their advocates, and then triumphantly confuting such arguments, as the best which can be used for them. This is a knack which the Baron frequently uses, by dressing up the sentiments of others in a caricature of his own making.

* Whimsical as such jargon as this may appear, the Baron is far from being the inventor of such mystical cant. One of his allegorical ancestors, Pope Innocent, made use of the same gibberish to wheedle King John out of the power of electing the archbishop of Canterbury. He sent John four gold rings set in precious stones, and commanded his majesty to consider the *form* of the rings, their *number*, their *matter*, and their *colour*. The form, he said, being round, signified eternity, which has neither beginning nor end. The number four being square, denoted steadiness of mind, and the four cardinal virtues. Gold, which was the matter, being the most precious of metals, signified wisdom, which was the most valuable of all accomplishments. The blue colour of the sapphire signified faith; the verdure of the emerald, hope; the redness of the ruby, charity; and the splendor of the topaz, good works. By such mystical mummary as this did Innocent repay John for one of the most important prerogatives of his crown, to strengthen the pope's influence, both against the king and his subjects. There seems to be no small correspondence between the pope's rings, and the Baron's arcana. Hume.

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in one undistinguished mass; so that when you have read these terms once, you may expect to read the most of them five thousand times over in the Baron's works.

By such an arbitrary and unauthorised way of turning historical facts, incidental occurrences, and the lives and conduct of men, into mystery and allegory, there is no way left for distinguishing between what is literal, and what is only emblematical; no way left to guard against the intrusions of the illiterate enthusiast, or designing impostor; no criterion left by which truth can be tried; yea, by such a fanciful and enthusiastic manner of expounding the scriptures as this, the will of God may be as soon found in the history of Alexander the Great, as in the history of the Old and New Testament.

Supposing, for instance, some bold enthusiast should start up, and tell the world, that ever since anno mundi 3648, man has been in a delusion and error about the true light from heaven, that in the 106th olympiad real goods and truths were born into the world, under the name of Alexander the Great; that this *grand man* had a certain arcana comprised in his name, the literal sense of which was never known till the days of Dean Swift, and the spiritual sense of its various parts never known till revealed by this new apostle. The literal sense as follows—*All-eggs-under-the-grate*. In the spiritual sense *all* signifies every sort of goods and truths. *Eggs* signifies the proliferation* of goods and truths. *Under* signifies evils and falses being in subjection to goods and truths. *The grate* signifies the centre† of that expanse, which in this new discovery is to be influenced by faith and charity. Alexander's being made generalissimo of the Greeks against Persia, signifies that charity precedes faith, faith being represented by the Greeks. His paying honours at the tomb of Achilles, signifies an interval or space of time when no charity was among men, which was from the death of Achilles, A. M. 3204, to the birth of Alexander 3648, including a period of 444 years, when this 3204 arcana was first published, although ——— never explained till this day. 444 the proof.

His gaining the first battle against the Persians, signifies how speedily the truth of this arcana, now when published

* Prolification of goods and truths. A favourite phrase of the Baron's, for which he tells us that the sexes marry in heaven.

† Centre and expanse. The Baron, for the spiritual improvement of his readers, proposes and discusses a problem, to the demonstration of which he had listened, by a satanical mathematician, viz. "whether the expanse be derived from the centre, or the centre from the expanse." See Universal Theology, No. 35.

published, will prevail over falses. Persia signifying that falses will perish, and rivers that they will be swept away as with an inundation of water. Alexander's marching to Phrygia, and cutting the Gordian knot with his sword, signifies that however plausibly evils and falses are dressed up, this new doctrine will detect and expose them. Darius advancing to meet Alexander the Great at the straits of Celicia, signifies that evils and falses will always oppose the goods of charity and truths of faith. Alexander's gaining a victory over Darius, signifies that when charity is opposed to evils, charity will always prevail. Alexander's entering into Egypt, after besieging and taking Gaza, signifies pyramids, and pyramids signify perpetuity, for the essence * of pyramids is perpetuity, and the form of perpetuity is pyramids.

I shall not tire the patience of the reader any longer with spinning out this rhapsody to a greater length, which could easily be done, but shall only observe, that absurd and ridiculous as it is, any fanatic coming amongst us, with strong pretensions to inspirations and a communication with the Deity, might by the same mode of argument that Mr. Swedenborg uses, defy all the arts of reason and ridicule to cause him to relinquish these whims, nor would the Baron bring one argument to support his memorable relations, that would not hold equally good in defence of spiritualizing the life of Alexander the Great; and whoever looks into the first volume of his *Arcana Celestia*, and considers what whimsical meanings he puts on the names of Adam, Eve, Noah, &c. &c. will find as much edification in hearing the life of Alexander the Great spiritualized, as in hearing the Baron expound the book of Genesis.

But nothing can be a clearer proof of the fanciful and enthusiastic manner in which the Baron expounds the scripture, than a comparison drawn between his method, and our blessed Saviour's or his apostles: as the Baron and his friends pretend the highest veneration for Jesus Christ, surely his mode of expounding the scriptures ought to be considered as a standard or criterion to try the merits of every commentator, that pretends to instruct his followers, by illustrating the oracles of God. His method of describing persons, doctrines,
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* The Baron tells us that the essence of faith is charity, and the form of charity is faith. See *Doctrine of the New Jerusalem*, p. 15. With equal reason might he have said, that the essence of sound is blue, and the form of blueness is a sound.

and duties appear remarkably different from the Baron's, in every point of view. For instance, when either our Saviour, or his apostles, have occasion to mention the patriarch Noah, or to explain what we are to believe concerning him; they advance none of those new-fangled doctrines about his non-existence, or his being only a spiritual representation of some churches goods and truths, or evils and fables, which the Baron, in his *Arcana Celestia*, maintains. No! they all give us a plain literal account of him, entirely corresponding with the literal account of him in the Old Testament. Christ says, that in his time, the people, in a state of carelessness, were indulging themselves in sin, till the *flood* came, and swept them all away, Matth. xxiv. 37. St. Peter tells us, that God's long-suffering waited for the reformation of the antediluvians, while his ark was preparing; but at last brought the flood upon the world of the ungodly, yet saved Noah and a few, that is, eight souls, which composed his household, 1 Pet. iii. 20, and 2 Pet. ii. 5. St. Paul only mentions him once, and that for the express purpose of telling us that he was warned of God to prepare an ark, to the saving of himself and his house, Heb. xi. 7. And when St. Luke adverts to him, it is to mark his lineal descent from Adam, whom, as he could trace human geneology no higher, he calls the Son of God. And his ark is mentioned in the same express literal manner, both by our Saviour, St. Paul, and St. Peter, without affixing any internal, supreme, or celestial senses to either; but confirming by their expositions in the New, what we had learned in the Old Testament, concerning both Noah and his ark.

When our Lord introduced a system of reform among the Jews, by correcting the false glosses which they had put on the law of God, suiting it to their own vicious purposes; when, in his admirable sermon on the mount, he rescues the third commandment from the corrupt interpretation of corrupt men, he does not begin, like the Baron, by amusing our fancies with the natural senses, spiritual senses, and celestial senses of that precept, but tells us in plain literal language that rash and unnecessary oaths are not only to be avoided, but that we are neither to swear by the heavens, nor the earth, nor by any member of our body, and that any thing beyond simply affirming or denying a proposition, cometh of evil. See Matth. v. 34.

When he would instruct us in the true meaning of that precept, "thou shalt not kill," far from trifling away his time in puerile distinctions about natural murder, spiritual murder, and supreme murder, as Mr. Swedenborg

denborg does, he tells us in few, but expressive words, that this precept prohibited not only taking away the life of our neighbour, but all causeless anger and malignant revenge.

When he expounds and enforces the duty enjoined in the seventh command, he does not amuse his audience, as the Baron does his readers (see *Doctrine of Life*, New Jerusalem, Nos. 100, 101) on quibbling distinctions between spiritual and supreme adultery; such trifling was below the dignity of his subject, but assures us, in the most pointed manner, that what was unlawful to do, was unlawful to indulge in our thoughts, and that he, who was only restrained from illicit commerce with a woman, from the want of opportunity, or the fear of shame, was considered in the eye of the Almighty, as a breaker of that law.

When our Saviour, or his apostles, have occasion to speak of the creation of the world, or of the first persons who inhabited the same, they never trace any circumstance beyond Moses' literal account of the cosmography, nor do they ever allude to any person's existence before that of Adam and Eve. When St. Paul speaks of Adam to the Romans, v. 14. he tells them that death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned, after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Here the apostle traces back the origin of death, and ascribes its source to Adam's transgression; nor does he in the least hint at any race of immortals, who lived in our world before Adam. And when speaking of Adam to the Corinthians, 1. xv. 45, he expressly calls him "the first man." And in his first letter to Timothy, ii. 13. he declares "that Adam was first formed." And St. Luke, when tracing back the genealogy of our Saviour, who was the son of Abram, who was the son of Adam, seeing he could find no human father from whose loins Adam had sprung; he very justly calls him the son of God, because he was the first of God's rational creation in this world. And our Saviour himself says, that "from the beginning of the creation God made mankind, male and female," (Matth. xix. 4.) expressly alluding thereby to the words of Moses, Gen. i. 27. where he tells us that God created man in his own image, male and female created he them, namely, Adam and Eve.

One should think that it would require pretty strong evidence to destroy such an accumulation of scripture testimonies, that Adam and Eve were the first of the intelligent creatures of God upon earth: but against all these concurring testimonies the Baron has only to bring

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down a memorable relation from heaven, as the papal bulls were formerly brought over from Rome, and lo! this truth, recited in historical detail by sacred writers in the Old Testament, and confirmed by Christ and his apostles in the New, must be destroyed at once, for the Baron informs us that he has authority to declare that "Adam was not the first of men, but by Adam and his wife is representatively described the first church." Universal Theology, No. 520.

Reader, I have set before thee the testimony of Christ and his apostles on the one hand, and Mr. Swedenborg's on the other, judge for thyself.



S E C T. III.

Containing Remarks on Mr. Swedenborg's Revival of the Heathenish and Sadducean Doctrine that there is no Resurrection from the Dead.

THE old tenets of the Heathens and Sadducees, in denying a resurrection, are again broached in the writings of Mr. Swedenborg (see Universal Theology, No. 693), who, with much banter and ridicule, and without ever once appealing to the *revelations* of Jesus Christ to support his opinions, substitutes *his own* in their room, and in a pretended dialogue which he once heard between a noviciate* priest, a politician, and philosopher, treats the universal faith of the christian church, and the whole tide of scripture, with the same contempt and burlesque as if they were nothing but old wives' fables, and borrows from Celsus and the ancient enemies of christianity, all the puzzling and metaphysical subtleties which they used to advance against those who preached Jesus and the resurrection.

Celsus used to call the hope of Christians, the hope of *worms*, who expected to crawl out of the earth in the returning spring; nor does the Baron exalt those who

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* Noviciate is the name which Baron Swedenborg gives to spirits just arrived in heaven, or the spiritual world.

believe in the resurrection much higher than these reptiles, for he tells us that the life of an *afs* is to be preferred to that of a man, if his body is to lie sixty centuries, like a prisoner, bound hand and foot in a dungeon, while his spirit is flying about the universe, expecting the last judgment, and then he asks if it be not contrary to reason to imagine that the soul can be re-invested with its natural body? Of all the foolish things the Baron has written, this should have been the last. For few will examine his visionary system, possessing the exercise of their reasoning faculties, but will find far greater reason to dissent from crediting his dreams and memorable relations, than to think it incredible that God should raise the dead, Acts xxvi. 8.

Nothing can be more obvious to the smallest attention, than that Christ and his apostles taught the doctrine of a general resurrection, and future judgment, in opposition to the Sadducees, who denied both. When Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection to the Athenian philosophers (Acts xvii. 31.), these Heathens, like the Baron, denied the apostle's doctrine, but they did not attempt to sophisticate his words, by affixing any other sense to them than that which their grammatical construction plainly admitted; instead of torturing his terms to suit their own ideas, they at once entered into the design of his words, and only mocked at the doctrine he intended to establish. When Paul said (Acts xxiii. 6.) that for the hope and resurrection of the dead he was called in question, why did the Baron's brethren, the Sadducees, nearly pull him in pieces, but because they did not believe his doctrine. Had their eyes been illuminated by the sun of the Baron's spiritual world, they might have easily accommodated the apostle's words to their own tenets, by pretending to understand him as speaking of the resurrection of *goods* and *truths* out of the grave of *evils* and *falses*. The contest, therefore, between the ancient Sadducees and the apostle, was far more rational and consistent than that of the modern Sadducees at this day. Both deny the same truth, they who heard the apostle preach it, as well as those who read it in his writings; but on different principles. Says the ancient Sadducees, "Paul, we understand you very well; like our neighbours, the Pharisees, ye maintain that our dead bodies shall at a certain future period be raised again into life—but we do not believe you." As the Sadducees heard Paul's personal ministry, they could be under no misapprehension of his meaning, for if they had, he

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he would have readily corrected it. Our modern Sadducees do not believe this fact neither; but as they find it suits their system to give the apostle credit for some of his assertions, they do not like bare-facedly to mock him, when he says, "that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust." But by pretending to know his meaning better than the Pharisees who believed, or the Sadducees who believed not his doctrine, they say the apostle's words meant no such things as the Pharisees and Sadducees were contending about. But could the apostle patiently look on, and see the errors of both, without rectifying their mistake, when even he himself was nearly torn in pieces, in consequence of both parties misunderstanding his words?

When Paul says, "that as by man came death" (it is hoped the Baron will allow that men literally die) does he not immediately add, "so by man also came the resurrection from the dead." Now by what rule of construction can a literal sense be put on the first part of this antithesis, and a mystical sense on the last? Would any man believe me, if from this text I should contend for the literal sense of the last proposition, and the figurative sense of the first?

Suppose I should say, it is true, there will be a resurrection by Christ at the last day. But you are not to understand the apostle in the literal sense, when he says, "in Adam all die;" here he only means *suspended animation*, and that when our friends have carried us to our subterraneous apartments, we awake, and prosecute our career in life with as much ardour as ever; and our resurrection only means our coming above ground, and entering into a new scene of action. Does not every one see the folly of such a comment, and how the Word of God would be tortured to countenance such sentiments. But no less absurdity attends the inverting of this scheme, by which our literal death by Adam is admitted, but our literal resurrection by Christ is denied.

When Martha said to Christ (John xi. 24.) that her brother Lazarus should rise again, in the resurrection at the last day, did she only mean a spiritual resurrection of faith and charity, or did she not rather mean the re-animating of his lifeless body, which by that time had been dead four days? This was what she meant, and it was what Christ wrought on him in her presence, and in the presence of many others. Was not the resurrection of Lazarus' body at the last day, closely connected with the idea of his being raised by the power of Christ that moment?

moment? Wherein would the difference of not believing the Baron's system till the last day of this year, and my believing it this moment, differ but merely in point of time? and wherein did that resurrection which Christ effected on Lazarus, differ* from that which his sister expected at the last day, but in point of time likewise? When Christ had foretold (Mark viii. 31.) that after being killed by the elders and scribes, in the space of three days he would *rise* again, did he not mean that his body would literally rise from the tomb within that time? and did not the event verify his prediction? But if the dead bodies of men literally rise not, then is not Christ literally raised (1 Cor. xv. 16.). But if Christ be raised, how can the Baron, or his followers, say that there is no resurrection of the dead? The very idea which all ancient and modern languages have attached to *rising again* and *resurrection*, imports a re-animation of animal life, and a rising up from below where all dead bodies are deposited. When Paul says (1 Cor. xv. 42.) that the body is sown in dishonour, does he not allude to its being cast into the ground, as the husbandman casteth seed into the field? and when he says that it is raised in glory, does he not there speak of raising the same body which was sowed, just as Ebed-melech raised up Jeremiah out of the dungeon? When Christ said, John v. 28, 29. that the hour should come when *all* that were in their *graves* should hear his voice, and come forth, either to a resurrection of happiness or misery, did he mean only spiritual graves? I think the Baron never speaks of graves in his spiritual worlds; of caverns and workhouses he frequently takes notice, but what can these graves mean? He tells us about young children and old decrepid females, appearing in all the bloom of youth in heaven, and also of marriages and churches in the spiritual world, but we hear of no physicians, coffins, sextons, funerals, nor *graves*. If we may credit the scriptures, they assure us, that Jesus Christ is appointed of God to be the judge of quick and dead, and by dead we understand those that shall be in their graves, and by quick we understand those who shall be alive at his second coming; and that we, even our souls and bodies, shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and that the dead, small and great, shall be assembled on that important occasion, and

* Observe, I am not speaking of the moral qualities, nor immortal state of the body after the resurrection, but merely that dead bodies shall rise.

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and that the same Jesus, who was taken up from the apostles at Mount Olivet, while they gazed at his ascension, will come in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven. But against all these plain and unequivocal declarations of a resurrection from the dead, and of Jesus Christ's second coming, to render to every man according to his works, against these the Baron has at hand a ready-made salvo, "That Christ cannot manifest himself in person."

And after telling us that the clouds, in which he said he will come, signifies the literal sense of the Word, and power and glory the spiritual sense, (see Universal Theology, No. 776) he informs us that his second coming is to be effected by a man, before whom he hath manifested himself in person, and whom he hath filled with his spirit, to teach the doctrines of the New Church by the Word from him (No. 779) and this man, by whom the Lord is to come a second time into the world, is no other person than "the Honourable Emanuel Swedenborg;" for says that gentleman, "he has appeared to me his servant, and sent me on this office, and granted me to see the spiritual world, the heavens, and the hells, and to converse with angels and spirits; this I testify in truth, and from the first day of my call to this office, I never received any thing appertaining to the doctrines of that church, from any angel, but from the Lord alone, whilst I was reading the Word." All I shall observe on this wonderful discovery is, that it was a very great pity, when our translators rendered the original texts of our Bible into English, they were not acquainted with this marvelous arcana of the Baron's: how easily might they have prevented much infidelity and scepticism about the authenticity of Mr. Swedenborg's mission; for instead of giving us a natural sense of the Word, they might have, by a very small alteration in the phraseology of scripture, paved the way and prepared our minds for the reception of this wonderful arcana, and thereby prevented me and such-like carnal men * from telling the world, that as he only beareth

* Carnal men, and carnal minds, are epithets which the Baron and his translators frequently bestow on those who feel themselves justified in dissenting from his opinions. We are sorry to observe, that this species of theological chicane, is not merely confined to the Baron and his followers; how often do we hear such abusive language, both from the pulpit and the press, sanctioned by those from whom better things might be expected. With what indignation must a thinking mind be compelled to listen to an uncharitable dogmatist, haranguing

bearcth witness to himself, his witness is not true. Instead of our carnal outward letters, John v. 28. might have been much better rendered thus: "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of Emanuel Swedenborg, and come forth, &c. and in 1 Cor. v. 10, instead of saying that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, &c. they might have rendered it, before the judgment-seat of Baron Swedenborg; and instead of saying that he preached unto them Jesus and a resurrection, they might have rendered it, Baron Swedenborg and a resurrection from the literal to the spiritual sense of the Word. And whereas the very last promise in the Word has led simple minds to think that Christ would literally come again into the world, and the very writer of the passage has put as it were a petition into our mouths, expressive of our desires to that effect (see Rev. xxii. 20.). How much better would it have been, according to this spiritual light, to have said, Behold, Baron Swedenborg cometh quickly, even so come, Most Noble Baron*.

O indignant reader! canst thou see this clod of clay sitting in the temple of God, and appropriating to himself those passages of scripture which only belong to the Saviour and Judge of the universe, without feeling in thy breast the sentiments of marked opposition against such a mixture of pride, enthusiasm, and blasphemy?

If every passage in the New Testament which speaks of

an assembly from a place where decency forbids the merited retort; while he tells his auditory, that the controverted topic on which he declaims is allowed by all but *carnal minds*, and that the opposite sentiments are suited unto and adopted by the *unregenerated* and *unconverted* part of mankind. Such language, in my opinion, deserves the severest animadversion. As it has not only a most unhappy influence on the natural tempers of those who credit such defamation, but is in plain English a bearing false witness against our neighbour. To say that any man disbelieves my sentiments from some secret malignity of heart, of which I can have no existing evidence in his life and conduct, is taking upon me uncharitably to judge the servant of another, and to arraign ideas as criminal in the sight of God, when at the same time I have no proof that they arise from a criminal intention.

* The late editor of a periodical magazine has informed posterity, that while the Baron lodged with a Mr. Brochmer in London, he told his landlord, "that he was the Messiah, and that he was come to be crucified for the Jews." The friends of the Baron, after labouring hard (in the Heaven and Hell Magazine for March 1781), to extenuate the number of freaks and enthusiasms peculiar to that holy madman, are obliged to acknowledge "that Swedenborg once called himself the Messiah." It needs, therefore, little penetration to see why he denies the second coming of Christ, it is, that he may have the honour of coming in his room.

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of Christ's second coming to judge the world, must be considered as alluding to the coming and preaching of this man, what is that but to substitute in these texts the name of Baron Swedenborg, for Jesus Christ, and at one blow to sweep away the foundation of the christian's hope in a future resurrection, which has all along distinguished the gospel of Christ from every Pagan system and Sadducean tenet hitherto invented by the craft or cunning of artful and designing men, and to substitute in its stead the reveries of a man, at whose side a person could not have walked the streets, without hearing him speak such ridiculous nonsense *, as nothing but a total derangement of intellects could justify.

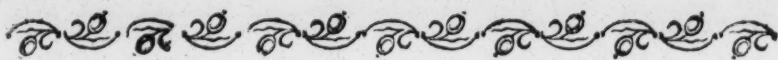
For any one to be so attached to allegory and metaphor, as to suffer their minds to be led away from believing the grand doctrines of a resurrection, a future judgment, and Christ's second coming, by substituting in their room such cant phrases as *goods of charity—truths of faith—the proceeding divine sphere—the connecting divine sphere—the ultimates of the internals of life—the medial sense between the spiritual and natural man*—whoever can think the combination of such words as these, for ideas they have none, are a sufficient substitute for believing these grand and universal truths, may as well allegorize away his first coming, and turn all the circumstances attending his birth, doctrines, sufferings, and death, into a parable or fable, and the consequence be to deny as obstinately that ever he *did* come, as that he ever *will* come again into the world. Indeed, if we were allowed to sport in this manner with the writings of any one, whoever could be able to ascertain the meaning of an author, if his words are not to be an index pointing out the corresponding ideas of his mind. What confusion would such a scheme introduce among men, if every word that we read has an idea different

* Mr. Lindsey says (Second Address to the Oxford Students, page 178), that a person of great worth and credit, still living, informed him, that a friend of his several years ago walking with Baron Swedenborg along Cheapside, in one part, the Baron suddenly bowed very low to the ground; when the gentleman lifting him up, and asking what he was about, the Baron replied by asking him if he did not see Moses pass by, and told him that he had bowed to him. The man that could see Moses walking along Cheapside, might see or fancy any thing after that; but to think that men of study and reflection, should believe him when he says that *he* is alluded to in those scriptures that mention Christ's second coming, is to assure the wildest raving frantic in the world, that whatever they say, they will never want believers and followers, whose credulity can only be equalled by their absurdities.

different to that which appears on the face of it; we had better at once melt down our English language into a sort of Corinthian brass, and from the alphabetical liquidcoin a new vocabulary, with fixed and determined ideas annexed to each phrase. Such is the rage of this New Sectary for *allegorizing*, *internalizing*, and *spiritualizing* every word and every object which they see, that I should not be surprised to hear some of the Baron's followers tell me by and by, that there was no such an animal as a horse, for although our organs of vision fancied that they saw an assemblage of members contacted in a body resembling that creature, yet as our *interiors* were not illuminated by the *celestial influx* of their *spiritual world*, we must be told that this walking object, which we fancied to be a horse, was only an emblem of divine goods and divine truths; that his head signified the *principles* of the *internals* of life, that his tail signified the *ultimates* of the *internals* of life; that his four feet signified four churches, *Antidiluvian*, *Israelitish*, *Christian*, and *New Jerusalem* churches; that his flesh and bones signifies the *essence of faith*, which is charity; and his exterior figure signifieth the *form of charity*, which is faith; that his eating and drinking signifieth *participation* and *consociation* of goods and truths; venting his ordure signifieth the extermination of *evils* and *falses*; and his breathing signifieth *divine influx*. Fanciful as this allegory may appear to the judicious reader, I am firmly of opinion that the imaginations of many, whose visionary turn of mind have led them to believe the reveries of Mr. Swedenborg, could be so far wrought upon as to credit this lecture on *spiritual horses*, and to consider it as a good acquisition to the discoveries and arcana of their new apostle.

And I may farther add, that there is just as much propriety in endeavouring to persuade men that there is no such thing as a horse in the world, and that the exterior figure of that animal is only an assemblage of *spiritual goods* and *spiritual truths*, as to persuade any one who has read and believes his Bible, that God will not raise the dead.

O Voltaire! how has such religious nonsense as this, hardened thee and thy followers in infidelity.



S E C T. IV.

Containing Remarks on the unwarrantable Freedom which Swedenborgianism uses with the Holy Scriptures.

IT appears to me, that among all the other singularities of Mr. Swedenborg, he must have denied nearly one-half of the Holy Scriptures; this, I confess, I have not seen in any of his writings, but in a catechism for the use of the New Church, just now before me, I find an abstract of his tenets, and which I should think has been drawn up by those who were perfectly acquainted with every word which he has written. In this catechism is the following most singular and extraordinary question;

Which are the books of the Word?

Answer, all those which have the internal sense, which are as follows, that is to say, in the Old Testament, the five books of Moses called Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; the book of Joshua, the book of Judges, the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the Psalms of David, the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and in the New Testament, the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the Revelations.

According to the answer given to this question, no less than one and thirty books of the Holy Scriptures are expunged from the Word of God to make room for the Baron's system*. For if those omitted contain not what they are pleased to call the internal sense, and consequently are none of the Word, what is that but saying, in their usual uncouth manner, that thirty-one books in the Bible are false, or do not belong to the scriptures.

Just as if one should ask you, in the presence of ten persons, how many honest men there were in the room,

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* I have been told by those who have had access to the libraries of some of the Baron's followers, that on taking up their Bibles they have seen whole verses and chapters here and there expunged with a pen; a plain proof how little value they set on the Word of God, when compared to the oracles and visions of their new apostle.

and you make answer, and say fix, what is this but to say that the other four are rogues or thieves. So does the answer to this question appear to me, and I am sure it will appear so to every other person who reads it, nor will all the quibbles they can use about spiritual, celestial, and supreme scriptures, be able to elude the force of this plain and obvious consequence.

On this strange mangling of the Word of God, I shall beg leave to lay before my readers the following

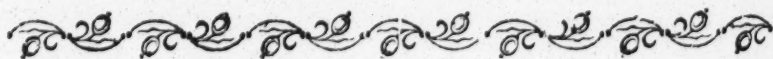
REMARKS.

It has always been a maxim with me to grant, in the fullest sense of the word, the greatest liberty of inquiry to those, who in searching after divine truth, are willing to be content with what they can find in the Holy Scriptures, and do not assume to be wise above what is therein written. I venerate that man, whatever his views of the scheme of Christianity may be, who with an honest and sincere heart can truly say, that he has learned his religious system from the oracles of God, without diminishing from or adding thereunto. We know but in part, and so long as studious men search and judge for themselves, they will more or less differ in some things; it has always been the case, notwithstanding the various methods which religious despotism has taken, to make the weakest party think like the strongest. Disclaiming, therefore, every method of enforcing truth, but by a free and rational appeal to the understandings and consciences of those who deny it, I cannot help bearing my testimony in the most ample manner, against a system like Mr. Swedenborg's. A system which is guided in no way by those methods of investigation, which great and learned men in every age have availed themselves of. A system, which leaves no criterion whereby we can discern the most raving rhapsodies, from the most critical and solid investigation of truth. A system, which admits the pretended revelations of a man to be divine, however much they contradict those which have already been received, and a system, which, as in the question before us, expunges at one stroke nearly one-half of the Word of God from the other, and sends this mangled account of it abroad into the world, without assigning the slightest reason for so doing. What must the poor illiterate mechanic or day labourer think of his Bible, perhaps the only volume in his custody, when he is told by this pamphlet, that thirty-one books therein do not belong to it. What must

must he think of Christ and his apostles, when he is told not to believe what the greater part of them have written concerning their Lord and Master. What must he think even of that which they suffer to remain in his Bible, if the one part be fraud and fiction, why not the other; they are unable to give him any good argument for expunging one part, without enabling him by the same argument to reject the other likewise. How incompetent are numbers, who are deluded by this imposture, to judge about the authenticity of scripture. Many of whom can scarcely read a chapter of that Bible they are taught to tear in pieces. Many of whom are merely caught by the unmeaning jargon which they hear in the mouths of those, who by flattering their vanity, pretend to inform them of what eye has not yet seen, nor ear heard, and even while they are hearing or reading a combination of unintelligible sentences, picked from the writings of this man, not one out of an hundred can define or understand what they mean. And what would the parents of those children answer, who put this catechism into the hands of their offspring, should they be asked why these thirty-one books remain in the Bible, if they have no connection with it? If none of these books belong to the Word, what impostors must Peter, Paul, and James have been, for writing and sending them abroad into the world, as being what they heard and were taught from their Lord and Master. Much, I suppose, would the admirers of the Baron rejoice, could there appear as unexceptionable evidence of his apostleship, as there is internal and external evidence of the truth of those parts of divine revelation which they reject.

But supposing they should say that by the *Word*, they meant only that those books mentioned in the answer, contained an internal, and the books not mentioned, are to be considered in a literal sense; be it so. Still the question is most improperly put, and as improperly answered, and carries in it, as indeed all the writings of their chief do, such ambiguity, and might be the source of endless wrangling and contention, to define what it would have the world to believe by such a reply. So much cloud and confusion seems to be on the face of it, that hundreds even of those who profess to believe the Baron, though they purchase and give it to their children to read, when pressed to explain it, know not what to make of it; or if they should happen to give it some illustration, the beginning and end of their elucidations are so contradictory, and their remarks so opposite

posite one to another, that you easily see they believe and profess they know not what. But supposing that those scriptures omitted in the answer are to be understood literally, must the external contradict the internal; must St. Matthew, the celestial writer, contradict St. Paul, the literal writer; or must St. John, who wrote internal, supreme, and spiritual truths in his gospel and revelations, contradict St. John, who writes external truths in his three epistles? If, as the Baron tells us, the literal sense be the basis, continent, and firmament of the spiritual and celestial sense, what sort of a fabric can be raised, where the basis is torn away. How inconsistent is he to say, that the literal sense is the basis, when in one place he does not allow the literal sense at all, and in another tears it entirely from the Word of God. He tells us of literal, spiritual, and celestial theft; we smile, it is true, at the fanciful distinctions, but while he admitted of literal theft, and made it the basis of the rest of his thefts, we did not much care though he had told us that there were angelical, diabolical, political, logical, ærial, and nocturnal theft, or as many thefts as he could find adjectives to prefix to the word; nor should we have much quarrelled with him about spiritual, celestial, supreme, internal, diabolical, or angelical resurrections, had he but allowed a literal resurrection as the basis, continent, and firmament of the rest of his resurrections; but that would not suit his designs of having his own name substituted in the room of our blessed Saviour's, whom he wishes to rob of the honour of coming a second time into the world.



SECT. V.

Containing great Mysteries revealed in a Style truly mysterious.

ANOTHER striking feature in the character of Mr. Swedenborg's writings, is an affected obscurity and unintelligibleness in the most of his doctrines; in this,

this, however, he has no claim to originality, for many of those enthusiasts and impostors already mentioned, have availed themselves of the same art to gain the applause of the world, to what they could not understand, and by an assemblage of words, from which no distinct ideas could be drawn, their followers have fancied that they possessed superior knowledge to others, because they pronounced sentences that nobody could comprehend, merely because there was nothing in them to be comprehended but the letters and syllables of which they were composed. Mr. Swedenborg was too well acquainted with the writings of the ancient and modern teachers of this class, not to have availed himself of their style and phraseology. Irenæus (p. 99) could have told him how Basilides, the heretic, taught "that he and his followers knew all, and penetrate all, themselves being invisible. Know yourself," says he, "but let nobody else know you. The many must not, and cannot know your affairs, but only one of a thousand, and two of ten thousand." And from the writings of Tertullian, p. 250, he might learn, that "nothing was more carefully observed by the ancient Valentinians, than to hide what they preach; if they may be said to preach what they hide; they intrust nothing to their followers, till they make them their own." "Because," as Epiphanius says of them, p. 179, "all are not fit for such knowledge, and it must not be spoken too plainly, but darkly and mysteriously." And Rimius, in his account of the Moravians, (p. 33) makes the same observation on Count Zindendorff and his followers. "It is not easy," says he, "to come at the tenets of this sect, on account of the great obscurity affected by their teachers, who make it their study to speak and write that they may not be understood."

How far Mr. Swedenborg has copied these originals, in the affected obscurity of his style, will best appear by the following sentences, which I have extracted from his works in the course of my perusing them.

In his Universal Theology, No. 368, he says, "The Lord is faith and charity in man, and man is charity and faith in the Lord." That the Lord can work in the mind of man by the irradiations of his spirit, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, is a plain scriptural truth. But to attempt to explain this operation by saying, that the Lord is faith and charity in man, and man charity and faith in the Lord, is just as absurd as to explain a man's bridling and saddling a horse, by telling us, "that the man is saddle and bridle in the horse, and the horse bridle and saddle in the man."

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He says (Doctrine of the New Jerusalem, p. 116) "so long as a man is under the influence of sinful desires, so long he is in hell; but when he conquers these habits, he is in heaven." To say that a man is actually in hell, when he does an evil action, or in heaven, when he does a good, is as uncouth a mode of expression, as if one should say, so long as a man robs on the highway, so long he is in chains hanging on a gallows, but when he conquers this habit of robbing, he is in perfect life and honour. To say that a man is in the road to hell or heaven, as his conduct appears good or bad, is intelligible language; but to say that he is in either, while in this life, is fanciful and erroneous.

In his treatise on Heaven and Hell, No. 54, he says, "Heaven is not without any one, but within him." This is just as ridiculous a way of expressing himself, as if he had told us that the houses in which we lodge, are not without us, but within us, and that we cover them from rain and cold, instead of their covering us. That there are certain dispositions and endowments of the mind requisite for us to possess before we attain to an everlasting habitation in heaven, is a fact few will deny, that believes there is a heaven; but to say that heaven is in man, instead of his preparing to be in it, is as literal and logical a falsehood, as to say my glove is within my hand, instead of saying my hand is within my glove.

No. 48. "Every angelic society is a heaven in a lesser form, and every individual angel a heaven in the least form." Few would think that I spoke with perspicuity, if I should say, every society of his majesty's subjects, is Great Britain in a lesser form, and every individual subject, is Great Britain in its least form. Heaven cannot be made lesser nor larger, however many angelic societies may be in it.

No. 57. "The church is in man. The church is within a man, not without a man. He is a church in the least form. He is an angel-man." How fond a person must be of allegorizing and turning into mystery the plainest duties of christianity, who affects to convey religious instruction in such a fanciful manner as this. I am aware that in apology for such phrases as these, their admirers tell us, it may be spoken so in a certain sense. True, no body can hinder you from speaking in as many senses as your fancy may suggest to you, but I would beg leave to ask if such a way of speaking be good sense, is it just sense? is it literal sense? it cannot be figurative sense, when the literal sense is denied, as it

is by saying, that heaven and the church are not without a man, but within him; your fancy may add as many senses to it as Mr. Swedenborg's fancy does to faith, even twenty kinds of it, (Universal Theology, No. 344) in which he tells us that there is adolescent, celestial, spiritual, blind, purblind, heretical, harlot, and adulterous faith, &c. &c. But with a very small share of common sense, I think it no great difficulty to see such glaring and lawless deviations from literal and actual facts; so far from carrying any intelligence with them, that they are no better than allegorical *nonsense* *.

Nos. 65, 66, 67. "Heaven resembles one man, in members and parts, and after the same names; accordingly, the angels say, such a society is in the member of the head, breast, lungs, but the supreme society is in the neck. The second heavens forms the breast down to the loins and knees, and the lowest or first heaven forms the interior parts down to the feet. And also the arms, fingers, hands, and sides, the situation of the heavens is as the situation of the organs and bowels in man, so that heaven is considered as the *grand man*. Heaven resembles the human form." When we cast our eyes on the map of Europe, we see Italy resembles the leg of a man in form, but what proportion it bears in the Baron's science of correspondencies, to heaven, which, as he says, appears like a human form, and grand man, I shall not take upon me to determine, as I have never yet been in heaven, to draw a chart of its form and dimensions; I confess this celestial anatomy is above my comprehension. However, till the Baron gives us better evidences that he saw this *grand man*, than he has given us that he saw Moses walking in Cheapside, I beg leave for

* I remember to have seen in the Baron's works, the page I have forgot, on what he grounds the church heaven and hell, &c. &c. being within man. It is on Luke xvii. 21, where Christ told the Pharisees, that the kingdom of God was within them. But nothing but a total inattention to the original, the scope of the passage, and even the very margin of our English Bibles, could induce a classical scholar to think that our Saviour here meant *ENTOS UMON ESTIN*, to signify is within you, when it plainly signifies is amongst you. And what was it that was amongst them? Why Jesus Christ and his doctrine, which is figuratively termed the kingdom of God, in as much as it led to the final enjoyment of that kingdom. Our Lord does not here speak of any power that he had gained by his doctrine over the hearts of the Jews, and much less the Pharisees to whom he speaks, but that the kingdom of the Messiah began now to appear, and the gospel of that kingdom was preached among (not within) them. In this sense *ENTOS UMON* & *EN UMIN* are frequently used in the Old Testament, by the Seventy, Gen. xxiii. 9. Give me it for a place of burial, *EN UMIN*, amongst you. Exod. xvii. 7. Is the Lord, *EN UMIN*, amongst us or not?

for one to withhold my assent from believing the topographical exactness of Mr. Swedenborg's celestial map.

In the following sentence you find the Baron in the clouds and contradictions again. No. 203. "As far as one is in the form of heaven, so far is he in heaven, nay, so far is a heaven in its lowest form." It is but just lately that we were told heaven was not without any one, but within him; now the tables are turned, and instead of heaven being within him, he is within heaven. This is a very odd way of metaphorizing heaven into a man, and man into a heaven. The one time we are told that heaven is in man, and is man, the next time we are informed that man is in heaven. What contradictions and absurdities does he expose himself to, who obstinately refuses to speak or write in plain intelligible language like other people.

No. 361. "Uses in the other world appear in splendid forms, the good of use as gold, and the true of use as silver." The great obscurity of this expression lies hid in the words *uses* and *forms*. If by *uses* the Baron means the good actions of men in heaven, can he wish us to believe that our virtues will be arrayed in grand apparel, and stand like a man in splendid forms before our faces in the other world? or does he mean that all the good which we do will appear like a statue of gold before us, and all the truths which we believe as a statue of silver, and that these splendid forms will be more or less in size, as we have more or less been eminent in either believing or doing the will of God? The phrases *good of use*, and *true of use*, sound very harsh in an Englishman's ears, but by *good* and *true* I suppose he means doing and believing. Yet I can form no idea how our doing and believing will stand in splendid forms before us in heaven. The Baron tells us (Universal Theology, No. 108) "that he saw the Lord making a new angelic heaven about the year 1770." It will certainly accommodate some of those splendid forms, as every man has two of them. It is to be wished that when Mr. Swedenborg teaches us about heaven, he would put his words in such construction as they might be understood on earth; for I am sure that the most part of the inhabitants of this planet, know as little about uses appearing in the other world in splendid forms, with the good of use as gold, and the true of use as silver, as the fishermen in the Orkneys would know what one of their companions said, if he came from London and told them, that the noise of the wild
beasts

beasts in the Tower appear in splendid forms, the *good* of their noise as gold, and the *true* of their noise as silver. Indeed every way in which I consider this assertion, it appears to be *mystery rendered more mysterious*.

Last Judgment, p. 12. "Angels and spirits are with man, and [reside] in his affections." If angels, as the Baron tells us, are substantial bodies, to say they reside in our affections, is as absurd as to say, that a man lives in the bray of an ass, or that the ass lives in the colour of his coat. If angels live in man's affections, pray who lives in the affections of angels? Or what angels was it that lived in the affections of the first man, as, according to the Baron, all angels, and even devils, have once been men.

Universal Theology, No. 30. "God is in space, without space, and in time, without time." No. 65. "The Lord made himself righteousness by acts of redemption. The proceeding divine sphere is divine truth.—The connecting divine sphere is divine good.—The divine love of the divine wisdom, in first principles, and in ultimates.—The ultimates of the internals of life.—The medial sense between the spiritual and natural man.—The male is the wisdom of love, and the female the love of his wisdom.—The will of the flesh is the propriety of man's will, which in itself is evil, and the will of man is the propriety of his understanding, which in itself is the false, derived from evil.—The Lord and hell fight in man, and contend for dominion over him." These mysteries of the Baron's, which appear to me to be so hard to be understood, put me in mind of what Dr. Jortin somewhere says of a poor clergyman, who was obliged to hide himself all the week for fear of an arrest, and on sabbath delivered his sermons in such abstruse language that nobody could understand him. Six days, says Jortin, he was invisible, and the seventh incomprehensible; and so is the Baron, when he is in the spiritual world he is invisible, and when he writes his account of it he is incomprehensible.

The following passages appear to me to be *darkness overwhelmed with darkness* (Universal Theology, No. 18). The esse of God is his inmost ground. His essence is the particular determination originating in the esse, and his existence is the external operation of both. (Universal Theology, No. 36). God's essence is love itself, and wisdom itself. Passing over the contradictions which appears here about God's essence, to say that the

divine essence is love and wisdom, because the scripture says God is love [that is, loving] and styles him perfect in wisdom, is just as absurd as to say, that his essence is a burning flame, because the scriptures say "our God is a consuming fire."

The truth of the matter is, that we know nothing at all about the essence of God, and whoever has confidence enough to pretend to illustrate the modus of existence in that ineffable being, their assurance ought to be checked by considering that important question never yet answered, "Who, by searching, can find out God?"

The vanity of desiring to be thought wise above what is written, has betrayed many into such labyrinths of confusion and contradiction, as have made them lose that esteem they otherwise might have merited, had they been content to follow only where reason and revelation led the way.

" 'Twas pride brought angels from their high abodes,
Men would be angels, angels would be Gods."

So fond is the Baron to find out the essence and forms of the understanding, and affections of the mind, which he always confounds with substance and colour in bodies, that he makes that to be substance, which every other person would make a property; for instance, to speak of the essence and form of anger, pride, or generosity, is not intelligible language, because these being affections of the mind, we cannot ascribe form nor essence to them, by any rules with which we are acquainted. To say that the essence of anger is a stone, wood, bones, or blood, is nonsense; but to speak of the cause of anger, and its effects, is a distinct mode of expression. Equally improper would it be to speak of the form of anger; can we say it is like a house, a beast, or a mountain? it makes the man in whose breast it is kindled, oftentimes look disagreeable to his nearest neighbour, but still our ideas are lost and bewildered when we attempt to apply form or space to any affection of the mind. This is one great cause why so much ambiguity and confusion appears in Mr. Swedenborg's writings, who, when speaking of goodness and truth, which every one considers as qualities and affections of the mind, without any relation to substance or space, he speaks of their essence and form just as if he were talking of substances, and tells us that "Good is the essence of truth, and truth is the form of good." Weak or unthinking minds may be caught by the novelty of such

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an expression, and the rhiming and chiming of its sound, but I am sure there is not one distinct idea contained in it, no more than in a person saying, that sound is the form of colour, and colour is the essence of sound. The same confusion of ideas appears in his description of faith and charity, who, instead of describing them as habits, affections, or qualities of the mind, tells us, that the essence of faith is charity, and the form of charity is faith; just as if charity had a form like a square, a triangle, or a circle, and faith had a substance like a log of wood, a shilling, or a bone. What person, without having recourse to mere quirk and quibble, can make any sense of such expressions as these. Faith is mediate charity.—Faith and charity make one, like essence and form.—As to the first of these expressions, it appears to me totally destitute of any acceptation. As to the second, it is a palpable mistake to say, faith and charity make one, for there may be faith where there is no charity, and charity where there is no faith. There is a great difference between believing and doing. Indeed the whole of Mr. Swedenborg's writings are filled with details of those who separate faith and charity, which he says here are one. So that whatever pains is taken to make these expressions of the Baron's stand on their legs, they are at best but a catalogue of crude, unintelligible phrases, which can never be made to speak any sense, till they are twisted and transposed, joined and disjoined in such a manner, as to make them look and read totally different from the present arrangement in which they appear in the Baron's writings. In this way the Baron confounds distinct ideas, which should always be kept asunder. As a proof, you will hear him and his friends frequently persuading us to believe, that wherever evil is, there also the devil is, and wherever the devil is, there hell is, for whether we speak of evil, the devil, or hell, it is the same thing, inasmuch as it is not possible they should ever be separate or put asunder*." What a medley of inconsistencies will appear here, if we criticise this passage; if devils be substantial forms, that is, beings of as solid a substance, as the desk on which I am writing, how is it possible for them to lodge in the affections of men, as the Baron tell us they do; and if the hells be nothing but eternal workhouses, how can the substantial form of a devil, the eternal workhouses of hell, and telling a lie, be one and the same thing, and cannot be separated nor put asunder; this is just as inconsistent and unguarded

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* See discourses already hinted at, p. 17, 18.

a way of speaking, as if I should say wherever idleness is, there theft is, and wherever theft is, there detection is, and wherever detection is, there the gallows is, and wherever the gallows is, there hell is; so that whether you speak of idleness, theft, detection, the gallows, or hell, you speak of one and the same thing, as it is impossible to divide them. Any one with half an eye in his head, can see the loose unguarded manner in which this string of distinct circumstances are fancifully and erroneously blended together. Who the devil is, whether he was once a man, as the Baron says, or made of fire, as Mahomet says, what are the extent of his powers, and how far he influences the actions of moral agents, are questions to which satisfactory answers have never yet been given.

The nicest metaphysician will find it difficult to draw the line between what a man does by his own animal and rational powers, and what he does by the power of the devil. It is true that the scriptures speak of the devil (or an adversary) tempting men to sin, but to infer from hence, that the devil that tempted, and the sin which was the consequence of that temptation, and hell or punishment, which is the consequence of that sin, are numerically one, and cannot be divided, is just as absurd as to say, that revenge, murder, and the punishment for murder, are one and the same thing.

Into the belief of such unmeaning expressions have many of his followers been led by his flattering their vanity, or rather their ignorance, in telling them that in all and every part of the Word there is an internal sense contained within the literal. But had he chosen to write about the scripture as their own internal evidence dictates, he would have told his readers that the word abounds with many rhetorical exornations, types, and figures, and that many words are distorted from their literal and primitive sense, to express under a figure what is only emblematically meant thereby. The epithet of figurative (not internal) which we apply to such a mode of instruction, is perhaps borrowed from the science of arithmetic, which is expressed by figures, that is, by signs corresponding to those numerical ideas which we wish to ascertain in our mind. For instance, the figure 4 is not actually that number, but only a mark or sign corresponding to that number. Here is actually the number four |||| these we justly say are four strokes, but the figure 4 is only a mark or symbol expressive of those strokes, or any other thing of an equal quantity.

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To apply this mode of reasoning to the explanation of the scripture,

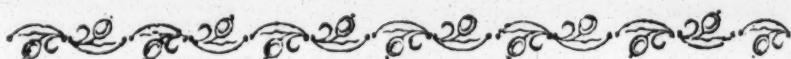
David says, Psalms lxxxiv. 11. God is a sun and a shield; to say that there is any internal sense here, is wishing to express ourselves singular, merely for the love of singularity, and to say that it is to be understood literally, is a gross mistake, but we are to understand it figuratively, and the figures from which we are to learn its import are the sun and a shield. The sun being the fountain of vegetable existence, and exhilarating by his beams the whole animal world, is here made use of as a figure to describe the goodness and providence of God, as the author and giver of every good and perfect gift to man. The shield * is another figure, borrowed from an ancient piece of defensive armour, made of light wood, or hides doubled into several folds, and fortified with plates of metal; this the soldier always held in his left-hand, to ward off the weapons of the enemy from his body. So that to say God is a shield, is to say in a figure that he defends from those dangers we could not foresee nor avoid; and when we say that he is both a sun and shield, we mean by these metaphors that the Almighty gives us those blessings which we enjoy, and wards off many dangers and evils from us which we could not do of ourselves. But from the scripture saying that God is a sun, to infer from hence, as the Baron does, that the Lord actually appears in heaven as a sun before the right eye, and as a moon before the left, (Heaven and Hell, p. 116) is an assertion fitter to be inserted in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, than in a system of religious knowledge for men to believe. Again, to say that the helmet, greaves, spear, target, and shield of Goliath, mentioned in historical detail, were not literal, but spiritual or celestial armour, and that Goliath only signifies some church, or *evils* and *falses*, is as ridiculous and absurd as it would be in one to think that the breast-plate, helmet, sword, and shield, which Paul bids the christian take (Eph. vi. 13) are literally and absolutely to

* Homer describes the use of the shield, in his account of the combat between Hector and Ajax, thus:

- "He said, and rising high above the field,
 "Whirl'd the long lance against the seven-fold *shield*,
 "Full on the brass, descending from above,
 "Through six bull hides the furious weapon drove,
 "Till in the seventh it fixed. Then Ajax threw
 "Thro' Hector's *shield* the forceful jav'lin flew,
 "From their bor'd *shields* the chiefs their jav'lins drew,
 "Then close impetuous, and the charge renew." *Iliad*, B. 7.

to be made out righteousness, the gospel, faith, and salvation.

So much for the affected obscurity of the Baron's writings.



S E C T. VI.

Containing a Catalogue of Contradictions.

ANOTHER evidence of the Baron's writings being the inventions of his own mind, and not the inspiration of heaven, is the numerous contradictions and inconsistencies that appear where his fancy has out-run either his judgment or his memory.

Take the following as a short specimen.

The Lord is in man. The Lord and hell fight in man, and contend for dominion over him. Universal Theology, No. 546.

The Lord is not in man. Evil prevents the Lord's entrance into man, for evil is hell, and the Lord is heaven, and heaven and hell are opposites. Doctrine of Life, New Jerusalem, p. 29.

R E M A R K S.

If evil be hell, how comes it to keep the Lord and heaven out of man? is it because it may chance to get the first possession, or is it that after having fought in man for some time, hell gets the better, and forces heaven to retreat, and prevents it in future from entering into a possession from which it has already been dislodged; or is it by mutual compact that some men are given up to hell, and some up to heaven, and consequently none can enter the dominions of the other; but this it cannot be, otherwise how could both fight in man for dominion. But what surprises us most is, that after all this

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this fighting and contending of heaven and hell for dominion over man, the Baron should tell us (Universal Theology, Nos. 356, 357) that man hath power to procure faith and charity for himself.

The Tree of Life, &c.

The tree of life signifies love, the tree of knowledge faith*.	The tree of life signifies the Lord in man, the tree of knowledge signifies man not in the Lord.
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R E M A R K S.

This paradox may perhaps be reconciled by telling us, that there are as many different meanings in these two trees, as there were different leaves hanging on their boughs.

Husband and wife.

Husband and wife signify truth and goodness. <i>Trinitarians cannot be in heaven.</i> To implant in children and young people the idea of three divine persons, to which is unavoidably annexed the idea of three gods, is to deprive them of all spiritual milk, and afterwards of all spiritual meat, and lastly of all spiritual rationality, the consequence of which is spiritual death (eternal damnation I suppose he means) to all those who confirm themselves in such an opinion. Universal Theology, No. 23.	Husband and wife signify evils and falses. <i>Trinitarians may be in heaven.</i> There are many persons, who, during their abode in the world, through simplicity and ignorance have imbibed falses as to faith; but have not lived in adulteries, &c. These, in another life, so long as they are principled in what is false, cannot be introduced into the heavenly societies, lest they should defile them. These are kept some time in the lower earth, and instructed in the truths of faith, and are afterwards taken up to heaven. Arcana Celestia, No. 1106.
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* It has been remarked in its proper place that those extracts from the Baron's works which appear here, were first transcribed by the author into a common place book, without any view of laying them before the public, and as he is convinced that the substance of every paragraph is strictly just, to an intelligible reader, this, and having returned the originals to their owners, will account for some extracts having no references, as also for any figure that should accidentally be found wrong.

R E M A R K S.

As children and young people are of all others the most susceptible of wrong ideas and falses as to faith, how the consequence can be spiritual death, and yet after a little time to get into heaven, is left for New Jerusalem logic to reconcile.

Heaven and hell is a state of permanency. Spirits know each other in the spiritual world, but not in heaven and hell, because in the spiritual world they are just as in the natural world, but afterwards all are *permanently fixed* in one state. Heaven and Hell, No. 148.

Heaven and hell not a state of permanency. A spirit once told the Baron that he was cast out of heaven by Michael's angels, and became an angel of the dragon, because he was a Trinitarian. Universal Theology, No. 110.

R E M A R K S.

How a spirit can be permanently fixed in heaven, and yet hurled out of it the next day, because he embraced in this life, and had been confirmed in the belief that God the Father and God the Son, were not one, but two persons, I cannot possibly reconcile, without making use of such quirks and quibbles as would appear ridiculous in any other argument.

N. B. According to the Baron's scheme, all spirits at first go into a place which he is pleased to term the spiritual world, and after a short time are conveyed to heaven or hell.

Belief unalterable after death. After death no one has it in his power to alter the belief which he hath impressed in his mind, by arguments of confirmation; it remaineth fixed, and cannot be rooted out, especially as to what relateth to God. Universal Theology.

Not unalterable. Luther is risen again, and hath renounced his errors respecting justification by a faith in three divine persons from eternity, and in consequence thereof is translated into the society of the blessed in the new heaven. Universal Theology, No. 137.

R E M A R K S.

As Luther, with all the order of Augustine friars to whom

which he belonged, was a Trinitarian before as well as after he left popery, how he could alter his opinions after death, if so be that belief remains fixed and cannot be rooted out as to what relateth to God, may appear to the Baron's followers a consistent truth, but I confess it appears to me a perfect contradiction.

Wives in hell. The wicked spirits, when they are brought into hell, are brought into a cavern, where there are harlots, and the noviciate spirit is permitted to take one to himself, and call her his wife. Universal Theology, No. 281.

No wives in hell. A single satan* and a woman once came from hell to see the Baron at his lodgings. The woman could assume all habits and figures of beauty, like a Venus, or princely virgin. The Baron asked the satan, if she was his wife? Satan replied, what is a wife? we do not know the meaning of the word, she is my harlot. Universal Theology, No. 80.

REMARKS,

Perhaps this contradiction may be ascribed to the ignorance of the satan who favoured the Baron with a visit, he not being acquainted with all the various orders and forms in the different hells. Indeed Mr. Swedenborg, in his Universal Theology, gives such scandalously obscene accounts of brothels and harlots, &c. &c. being in hell, as are fitter for the licentious pages of a Rochester, or a Buckingham, than for a system of religious instruction to prepare men for the kingdom of heaven.

Harlots in hell can beautify themselves. The female satan, who, with her infernal paramour, paid a morning visit once to the Baron, could change herself at pleas-

Harlots cannot beautify themselves. Those judges, who on earth perverted judgment, their office in hell is to prepare vermilion, and mix it into a paint, I to

* The reader is desired to take notice of a very important discovery of the Baron's, concerning the infernal system. "The satans," he tells us, "are those who have lived in falses, and consequent evils, and the devils are those who have lived in evils, and consequent falses." Universal Theology, No. 281. But I have not found out in his writings what the Belzebubs and the Lucifers are; however, if we might hazard an analogical conjecture, perhaps the Belzebubs are those who have lived in the essence of evils, which is falses, and the Lucifers those who have lived in the form of falses, which is evils.

pleasure into all forms and figures of beauty. Universal Theology, No. 80. to bedaub the faces of harlots, and give them the outward appearance of beauty. Universal Theology, No. 332.

REMARKS.

The Baron is like an eel among your hands, for when you think you have found out some uniformity in his system, down comes there another memorable relation, and like a Penelope's web undoes in one page what has been done in the other. All the remarks I shall make on these indelicate passages, is to promise the reader not to offend him with any more immodest extracts of this kind from the Baron's works, which, whoever looks into Nos. 570, 488, and 798, of his Universal Theology, but particularly into No. 388, will find such encouragement to lewdness under the veil of a pretended revelation from heaven, as in my judgment has a moral tendency to promote licentiousness, instead of godliness, in the minds of the young and unprincipled part of mankind who may read them.

Adam was the wisest of mankind.

Adam and his wife, the wisest of mankind, suffered themselves to be seduced by the serpent, and their first-born Cain slew his brother Abel. Universal Theology, No. 479.

Adam was not the first of mankind.

Adam was not the first of men, but by Adam and his wife is representatively described the first church. Universal Theology, No. 520.

This fact, he tells us, he has demonstrated elsewhere in his heavenly mysteries.

REMARKS.

If the Baron allows Adam to be the wisest of men, which the scriptures nowhere assert, and denies him to be the first of men, which the Bible positively says he was (see 1 Cor. xv. 45, 47) how shall we poor ignorant creatures act in such a dilemma; here is revelation against revelation, and the Baron's gospel against Christ's gospel; as no man can serve two masters, so no man can believe two contradictory revelations, without holding to the one, and disregarding the other. But this is not the only passage where the Baron, as with the authority of an angel from heaven, would have us to receive another gospel than that which we have received; for it

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is a maxim with him, to assert what the scripture denies, and to deny what the scripture asserts.

God will give no more revelations. It is not according to the divine order that man should receive instruction from heaven by any other writings than the scriptures, as these are the instituted means of communication between heaven and earth, and therefore between the Lord and man. Heaven and Hell, No. 258.

God has given more revelations. The Lord appeared to the Baron, and said, "I am God the Lord, the Creator and Redeemer; I have chosen thee to explain to men the interior and spiritual sense of the sacred writings: I will dictate to thee what thou ought to write." Anecdotes, p. 29. See also Universal Theology, No. 735.

What unaccountable assertions are these, to declare with one breath, that God dictated to him what he should write for man's instruction, and with the next to declare that God would give us instructions from heaven by no other writings than the scriptures; for his writings mention hundreds of particulars of which the scriptures give us no intimation, and assert many things which the scriptures absolutely deny. For instance, the Bible is entirely silent on the following particulars: That devils and angels were once men—that Calvinists are driven out of heaven, and have churches in hell—that Satans plunder the heavens—that married people quarrel in the other world—that Dutchmen are living on one side of the street in heaven, and their wives on the other—that tables are in heaven for bursting in explosions on those who lay too much stress on faith—that errors are in heaven—that infants are baptised in heaven—that the Lord appears in heaven as a sun before the right eye, and as a moon before the left. Now on all these modern discoveries of the Baron's the scriptures are quite silent.

But this is not all; not satisfied with advancing what the scriptures do not inform us of, he even takes upon him to deny several essential truths, which the Word of God positively asserts:

FOR INSTANCE,

The Baron says,
Adam was not the first man. Universal Theology, No. 520.

The Bible says,
The first man Adam was made a living soul. 1 Cor. xv. 45.

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The Baron says,

They marry in heaven for the proliferation of goods and truths.

There shall be no resurrection. Universal Theology, No. 693.

There never was a flood of water that drowned the antediluvians. Arcana Celestia.

The damned in hell are sometimes admitted into heaven.

There never will be a future nor general judgment.

Christ will never come again to judge the world.

The devils are atheists. Universal Theology, No. 77.

God's essence is divine love and divine wisdom.

The Lord not only redeemed men, but angels also. Universal Theology, No. 121.

The good angels are in hell, presiding over and modifying the punishment of the wicked. Arcana Celestia, No. 967.

What the late pious and ingenious Mr. Hervey said of one of his opponents, may, with a small variation, and still greater propriety, be applied to the Baron. "It is no matter whether he contradicts either himself or the Bible, providing he does but contradict." For if these be not contradictions of the most glaring and palpable nature, we may at once begin and invert all the ideas

The Bible says,

In heaven they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.

There shall be a resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust.

The flood came and swept them all away. Mat. xxiv. 39.

There is a great gulph fixed, over which they cannot pass to that blessed place. Luke xvi. 26.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Cor. v. 10.

Christ will come in the glory of his Father, to render to every man according to his works. Mat. xvi. 27.

The devils believe and tremble. James ii. 19.

Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out. Job, xxxvii. 23.

He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abram, and the angels who kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains. Heb. ii. 16. Jude 6.

There is a great gulph fixed. So that they who would pass from hence to you cannot. Luke xvi. 26.

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we have attached to our words, and say that noon-day signifies midnight darkness, and that every enthusiast and impostor from the days of Simon Magus to Baron Swedenborg, have spoken nothing to the world but the words of truth and soberness.

To persons determined at all events to sanction any absurdity, however glaring, this farrago may perhaps be considered as perfectly consistent and harmonious, but to a mind not caught through the pompous, but unmeaning combination of sentences in his writings, they will appear both contradictory and unintelligible. And an additional proof that such a jumble of inconsistencies could never originate with a God of order and consummate wisdom, but are the productions of a mind either labouring under the misfortune of intellectual derangement, or what is still more to be lamented, intentionally sent forth to lead captive silly minds, by speaking lies in hypocrisy. Indeed the whole that can be said of Mr. Swedenborg's writings, may be drawn within this narrow compass—either his works are an express revelation from God—or they are written under the influence of a disordered mind—or they are written, like the impostor Mahomet's, with an intention to impose upon and deceive the world. That they are not a revelation from God, I think I have already proved to a demonstration, so far as ever we have been taught in what manner to judge of the credibility of a divine mission. As to the second I allow it is possible, but indeed very improbable, that a man for twenty-seven years should be under the influence of such a delusion. With regard to the last I am not obliged to answer it; let it suffice, that I have shown he had no command from God to publish these works as a revelation from heaven. The heart of man is deceitful above all things, who can know it? The transition from enthusiasm to imposture is very easy. "The energy of a mind, still bent on the same object, may convert a general obligation into a particular call, and the warm suggestions of the understanding, or the fancy, may be considered as the inspiration of heaven; the labour of thought may expire in rapture and vision, and the inward sensations and invisible monitor may be described with the form and attitudes of an angel of God. From raptures of imagination to intentional imposture, the step is perilous and slippery: the demon of Socrates affords a memorable instance how a wise man may deceive himself, how a good man may deceive others, how the conscience may slumber in a mixed and middle state between self-illusion and voluntary fraud *." Whether the

* Gibbon.

the writings of Mr. Swedenborg be the effects of enthusiasm or imposture, or of both, I will not take upon me to determine; but that either a heated imagination, or a fraudulent intention has produced them, I as firmly believe as I believe in my own existence, nor do I hesitate in declaring them, after a very careful perusal, to be a most shameful corruption of Christianity, and a gross perversion of that revelation which God has made of his mind to the world.



S E C T. VII.

*Containing Remarks on Mr. Swedenborg's calling
his Followers The New Jerusalem Church.*

PERHAPS few theological stratagems have been more unhappily successful in scaring weak and timid minds from searching after truth, and judging according to the conviction of their own understanding, than the method adopted by religious parties, of culling from the sacred code, or vocabulary of their own language, some popular phrase or sentence, and then appropriating it to their own party as their exclusive privilege.

Complimenting themselves with such honorary appellations, and their dissenting brethren with those epithets of degradation which are opposed to them, have given rise to such local, arbitrary, and ambiguous phrases as *catholic* and *heretic*—*rational* and *irrational*—*churchman* and *schismatic*—*orthodox* and *heterodox*, &c. terms used by too many who deny or profess the ideas implied therein, without ever stopping to examine the system alluded to, but are either decoyed into, or frightened from such tenets, according as their different *watch-words* have chanced at first to sound favourable or unfavourable in their ears.

This error among Christians, has made a much greater progress in the world than perhaps we are aware of, because few, otherwise good men, are willing to see such artifice in their own party, though most complain of its being used by their opponents, and he would certainly do an essential service to the Christian religion, who could persuade the defenders of its respective parts, not to address the *passions* of men by such equivocal phrases, but appeal to their *understandings*, by the use of such terms as are allowed by their adversaries, as well as their admirers*.

Mr. Swedenborg therefore availing himself of the
wonderful

* I allow that it is requisite to make use of some term of distinction, in order to characterize one religious society of Christians from another, but I contend that those epithets should have no pomp nor parade in their sound, because they will on that account be the endless

wonderful effects which such popular and high sounding epithets have in all ages produced on superficial and half-thinking minds, has been pleased to distinguish his adherents by the name, stile, and title of *the New Church*, or *New Jerusalem Church*, borrowing this appellation, as Barclay did that of *Berean*, from a text of scripture in the New Testament, and it must be confessed that he and his followers have improved on the

hint

less source of litigation and wrangling with those who refuse us the exclusive use of such fulsome and self-created titles. For instance, for a religious society to call themselves an Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independent church, is a proper, and no wise unbecoming appellation, for it only imports that you prefer one of these modes of church government to another, without flinging any stigma on those with whom you do not associate, and what is still more, there is none of the other two but will allow you the undisturbed possession of such a designation. Farther, I see no impropriety when contemplating the different hypothesis of Athanasius and Arius, of Calvin and Arminius, for any society of men to call themselves Athanasians, Arians, Calvinists, or Arminians, as they favour either of the systems of those far-famed and eminently distinguished theologians. But to assume an honorary appellation, which the followers of Confucius or Zoroaster have as good a claim to as any society in England, and which no denomination of Christians admits us to enjoy, but as usurpers, appears to the sober part of mankind as ridiculous as for a man to take the designation of a lord, a earl, or a duke, a title which every one knows he has no right to assume, and which none gives him but as a term of derision, and in order to chastise his vanity. Therefore all such self-created titles as Unitarian churches, Gospel churches, Berean churches, orthodox* churches, or New Jerusalem churches, as every one of them flings an indirect stigma on those without the pale of their own party, and are allowed by none but such as exclusively appropriate such epithets to themselves; they ought to be exploded, and the Christian church no longer torn in pieces with such inflammatory and party-coloured phrases, to whose acceptation it would be as difficult to fix a universal standard, as to the terms sedition, heresy, or witchcraft, and are just as well calculated to make a proselyte from the sect of *Ali* or *Omar* among the *Turks*, as to give a weak and unfurnished mind better information concerning the *Christian* religion.

Although there are points commonly implied in some of the foregoing epithets, to which I solemnly declare my unfeigned belief, yet I can never think it just nor honourable to establish them by such unhandsome insinuations as these terms throw out against my fellow-servants, and as I cannot pretend to perfection either in knowledge or practice, as an honest man wishing to do to others as I would be done to, I could no more send abroad such unqualified terms into the world, as the badges of my party, than I could call them the holy church, the righteous church, or the humble church.

* So difficult is it to ascertain who are orthodox, or who are heterodox, by a party's arbitrarily assuming or disavowing these phrases, that I have found the most staunch Socinians of the age dubbing the translators of our Bibles with a heterodox scheme of the Christian religion, and calling Trinitarians heretics and apostates. This I mention purely to show the folly of any society of Christians appropriating such indefinite phrases to themselves. See a treatise on the attributes and worship of God, &c. by Hopton Haynes, Esq. page 40 and 154.

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hint to a wonderful advantage, by prefixing a few scripture names to the term *church*, and the rhiming and chiming of such compound words, artfully concluding with their own favourite designation, has been highly flattering to the vanity of those who are fond of the marvellous, and *love things unintelligible for their edification*.

In order to pave the way for the undisputed admission of this popular title, the Baron often takes care to have it linked with such former dispensations of God, as by way of analogy may most easily conciliate the approbation of his readers. Accordingly you frequently hear him and his admirers descanting on the *Adamic church*—the *Noahatic church*—the *Abramatic church*—the *Israelitish church*—the *Christian church*—and the *New Jerusalem church**. Here the *New Jerusalem Church* being found, as it were, in good company, passes with many for the legitimate companion, or successor of those with whom she is so artfully enrolled. But though she is reported to have come down from heaven, like a bride adorned to meet her bridegroom, let not the elegance of her dress, nor the honourable company with whom she affects to associate, fascinate our judgments from enquiring whether she be of celestial birth, or a spurious bantling, the mother of *saints*, or the mother of *harlots*, or whether she has derived her origin, as one of the Baron's translators remarks, "from the Father of *lights*, or the Father of *lies*."

The city of *Jerusalem* is eminently distinguished in scripture, as being the metropolis of Palestine, the seat or confluence of all the true worshippers of God, for more than a thousand years. It was there that the Shecinah, or Divine Presence was exhibited, and all the sacred apparatus belonging to the temple service deposited. From this city it was that the apostles first set out, by express command, to preach the everlasting gospel of Christ. Thus dignified and highly honoured as *Jerusalem* was, it became, in the language of prophecy, a term made use of to denote great blessings and felicity; just as Babylon is used to describe trouble, persecution, and distress, the one being the end and portion of good men, the other of bad.

Accordingly we find the prophets, speaking of *Jerusalem*, and the blessings prefigured thereby, with all the ardour and glow of sacred eloquence. David describes the happiness of God's people, under the similitude of the Lord's building up *Jerusalem*, Ps. cxlvii. 2. Isaiah, by his making it a praise, lxii. 7. and rejoicing, lxv. 18. Jeremiah calls it the throne of the Lord, iii. 17. and speaking of gospel times, tells us, *she shall dwell safely*, xxxiii. 16. Joel alluding to the same period, says that

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* See page 8.

the shall be holy, iii. 17. And the prophet Zechariah, who dwelt with peculiar pleasure on the happiness of God's people, under the similitude of this famous city, compares their felicity to living waters going out from *Jerusalem*, xiv. 8. and its citizens safely inhabited, ver. 11. and every vessel therein holiness to the Lord, v. 21. And speaking of the same period, he calls it a fountain opened to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*. Nor are the New Testament prophets less careful to use this figurative allusion, than the Old. St. John, the amanuensis of our blessed Lord, assures us, that those who are faithful unto death, shall have a distinguished seat in the paradise of God, which in allusion to the *Old* city, that had formerly manifested the Divine Power and Presence, he characterises as the *New Jerusalem*. And St. Paul, when speaking of the mildness and lenity of the gospel, and the gentle manner in which it was promulgated, when compared to the "fire and blackness, darkness and tempest," which accompanied the giving of the law, carries his thoughts back to Mount Zion, on which the temple antiently stood, and recollecting that *Jerusalem* was by way of eminence termed the City of God, he terms the blessings of the gospel, *Mount Zion*, or the *City of the Living God*, or the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, all of which are synonymous figures, Heb. xii, 22. And after St. John had given as it were a prophetic history of the church of Christ in the Revelations, and had brought her through all the trials and persecutions to which she has already been (or still continues to be) exposed, he conducts her at last to those regions of felicity, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, which in the usual figurative style of prophecy he calls a *holy city*, a *high mountain*, *New Jerusalem*, the *great City* or *Holy Jerusalem* *, Rev. xxi. 2, 10.

Mr. Swedenborg, catching at this last-quoted passage, presses it into the service of his system, and contends that it alludes to his *memorable relations*, and *new arcana*, which he says was sent down from heaven for him to publish †, and that those who believe and receive this

arcana,

* See also those prophecies which speak of troubles and punishments, under the figure of Babylon, Rev. xiv. 8. xvi. 19. xvii. 5. and xviii. 2, 10, 21.

† Among the many *memorable relations* told by the Baron, I cannot resist the desire of entertaining the reader with the following, which is not the least curious of the number. Universal Theology, No. 848, 'The angels wrote the *Arcana* in heaven, and let it down once to the natural world, and it fell amongst assemblies of learned clergy and laity, many of whom were heard to mutter words to this effect: "What have we got here? Is it any thing or nothing? What matters it whether we know these things, or do not know them? Surely they are the offspring of imagination, or a disordered brain?" And

arcana, shall be called the *New Jerusalem Church*, and that all other churches shall be swallowed up by this new dispensation, and shall give place to it; for as the Jewish dispensation gave way to the Christian, so shall the Christian dispensation to the discoveries made by the Baron.

Now supposing us willing to allow this assertion to be as near truth as it possibly can, it still wants those collateral evidences which are both to precede and follow after it, for prior to this *New Jerusalem's* appearing, the dead, small and great, are to be judged, xx. 12. the sea is to give up its dead, ver. 13. the wicked are to be cast into a lake of fire, which is the second death, ver. 15 and then the new heavens and the new earth is to appear, in which dwelleth righteousness, because the earth, and the works that are therein shall be burned up, 2 Pet. iii. 12. then, and not till then, shall this *new heaven*, or *New Jerusalem*, predicted by the prophet, make its appearance.

But another defection of this *New Church* of the Baron's is, that it by no means corresponds with that state of felicity promised to the inhabitants of the *New Jerusalem*, or holy city, for it says God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and among them there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain.

Are the Swedenborgians exempted from these calamities attending on humanity, any more than we the members of the *Old Church*, who lay claim to no such exclusive privileges? with regard to their moral state, they seem just like other people, some of them are virtuous, and some vicious, some pious, and some prophane. As to their domestic state, there seems to be among them the same plenty and poverty, happiness and misery, which others experience, just as they in general are sober and industrious, or idle and intemperate. In fine, no calamity, from the cradle to the grave, attacks other people, from which the Baron's followers seem to be exempted. An evident proof that the monopoly of this pompous title (as many others of a like kind) is a mere arbitrary usurpation of a word, which as it belongs to

And after treating it with indignity, the angels were ordered to take it up again, which affected the angels with sorrow.' Can any man read this plain narrative, without asking, where was this assembly sitting? of what members was it composed? have any of the then present members attested this to be a fact? I hope they are not all dead, as their united attestations would go a great way to confirm us in the belief of this *new arcana*. He cannot say it was only in the spiritual world; for he tells us that it passed through the spiritual into the natural world. It would have wonderfully confirmed the Baron's visions, had he got this narrative attested by the members of that assembly.

to every one, belongs to no one; and, as it belongs to no one, it is the highest arrogance for any one man, or sect of men, to lay an exclusive claim to it.

St. John's *New Jerusalem*, and the Baron's, differ as widely from each other, as the Baron's mode of expounding the scripture, does from that of Jesus Christ's. Every thing in the state which John describes, corresponds to the idea which we form of heavenly happiness—no sun—nor moon—nor temple*—nor gates—nor candle are wanted—as to the felicity of the inhabitants, every thing that now hurts or annoys shall be removed, neither crying—nor tears—nor pain—nor death shall approach them, because all those things shall be done away.

Consequently, till the Baron's friends can show us these things actually existing among them, as a confirmation of their verbal testimony that they are the *holy city*, and *New Jerusalem* church alluded to in that passage, they may as well call themselves *the new Corinthian* church, or *the new Ephesian* church, or any other name of a town or person mentioned in the Holy Scripture, which they think will have the most musical or pompous sound in the ears of their admirers, for they have equally the same right (or rather no right at all) to the one any more than to the other.

Upon the whole, whether we consider the impostors and enthusiasts, who have troubled the church of Christ from the commencement of Christianity down to Mr. Swedenborg, or whether we consider that gentleman's pretended visions in the celestial and infernal regions, his fanciful expositions of the Bible, the unwarrantable freedom which his adherents use with that sacred volume, his denying the resurrection, the inexplicable arrangement and affected obscurity of his writings, his palpable contradictions, or the pompous and bombastic title by which he distinguishes his followers; whether we consider all or either of these particulars, we may see how beneficial the apostle's advice is, not to believe every spirit who pretends to have been in heaven or in hell; learning how to instruct us, but to try them whether they be of God; just as we did Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, because many false prophets, of a fraudulent or fanatic turn of mind, have from time to time gone abroad into the world, who by their pretended visions and enthusiastic raptures, have deceived many.

* As Temples are abolished in the *New Jerusalem* (see Rev. xxi. 22.) there appears a great want of memory or modesty in the Baron's followers, in not being satisfied with calling their assembly houses, as other Christians do, *churches* or *chapels*, but aiming at the sublimity of every thing, call them *New Jerusalem Temples*.

